Kiss Me If You Can

Volume 1

ZIG

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Kiss Me If You Can

One

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DEDICATION

To those who read Kiss Me, Liar

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ALSO BY ZIG

Kiss Me If You Can

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Prologue

“Ah… hahh… ah… nnh…”

Short, shallow moans repeatedly leaked out of Josh’s mouth. His brain shook and vibrated along with his mercilessly convulsing body, not allowing any thoughts at all. Weakly sprawled across the bed, Josh instinctively lifted his legs and wrapped them around the man’s waist. He pulled him tightly toward himself with all that remained of his strength. The member that his bottom was chewing became sucked more deeply inside him with a tingling sensation.

Towering over Josh, the man spat out a deep moan between rough breaths. Supporting his own body with his arms, the man was pounding his lower body into Josh. Right away, the man shoved his arms under Josh’s knees and pushed them up. Having folded Josh in half, the man violently thrust his rod into the lifted behind.

“Ahaack…” A lengthy yelp crawled its way out from the depths of Josh’s throat. The man had no sympathy at all. He stacked his thick body on top of Josh, pressing him down and shoving himself in. The swollen, feverishly smelted member brutally slammed into Josh, who was crammed between the mattress and the man’s body.

He felt no such thing as pain. This was copulation. Since neither the man nor Josh had any sense in their heads, this couldn’t be called intercourse. All that could be known was the weight of the man’s member as it vigorously entered and exited Josh and the sweetness of the hole that frantically sucked it in.

Josh let out moan after moan as he embraced the man’s head. He vaguely realized that his body was ready. Perhaps the man had noticed too; his movements became even more robust as he dug in. Every time he stabbed and left, he penetrated Josh deeper. *More, stick it in deeper. Slam in me harder. In me, inside me—*

“Come in me, please—” Josh was begging out loud before he had even realized.

Finally, he rammed his entire rod into Josh and made it expand inside. A spot deep within Josh throbbed, and his scorching wet flesh bit tightly into the man’s member.

The man finally shuddered on top of him and came. His hot semen glubbed into Josh's tract and filled his abdomen. An unholy amount of liquid heavily filled his guts, but the man's member was plugged tightly and completely into the hole and blocked most of the liquid from seeping out. What the man had spilled wholly filled and pooled inside Josh. He took in every last bit of the other's seed.

Along with the semen that spread throughout his whole body like a drug, the man's sweet pheromones poured into Josh's nose. Josh drooped his weak body, hammered on pheromones. As his consciousness began to drift away and his eyes started to blur, the man suddenly bit into Josh's ear.

Josh screamed as a chilling crunch echoed inside his ears. His distant consciousness returned momentarily.

The man kept his member fixed inside Josh and violently sucked on his ear that he had just bitten. Josh trembled feebly in pain and shock.

The man's voice trickled into his ears. "You're all mine."

His low whisper sent shivers up Josh's spine. He instinctively clenched down there. With a deep moan, the man sank his teeth even harder into his flesh.

"Ngh… guhh…" Moans dribbled down Josh's lips, but the man didn't even flinch. He bit, sucked, and licked the bleeding ear for a long time before finally falling asleep, inhaling and exhaling with a regular rhythm. Josh only realized that the man had marked him many hours after his faded consciousness returned to him.

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Chapter 1

“Wait! Everyone, calm down. No, you can’t come any closer! Hey, hey! Watch it!” The security staff had their hands full blocking the incoming crowd. They were much too used controlling the fans in an event like this, but today was different from usual. They knew the reason, and they had been prepared for it. It was because of the top celebrity who would be arriving soon.

He had received an incredible amount of attention upon his debut; it would not be over-exaggerating to say that he made the entirety of North America go wild. Since then, he had built a solid foundation of fans year after year. He was recently acknowledged for his superb acting, and he thrived at the pinnacle of his career.

It was not difficult to spot someone who would say that they would do anything to be able to meet him just once in their life. There was one social media post that read that the poster would rob a bank just to draw his attention, which resulted in a brief unlaughable incident.

The news of his attending an event was enough to put the nearby area in mayhem. However, nobody thought it would be this bad.

The security staff hired for the event all had hoarse, metallic voices from shouting—to the point where they were coughing. Despite their efforts, there was an influx of people all over the place who were trying to break through the barrier and shoot forward whenever there was an opening. They were out of their minds blocking the crowd that was pushing against them from the front, all the while watching out for the hyenas who were aiming for openings.

I wish time would go faster, all the security staff thought simultaneously. The invitees were turning up one by one, but the most important face had yet to be seen. They would much rather he come quickly, get some pictures snapped, and go in. Wouldn’t that make things easier?

Their desperate hope aside, more people began to join the crowd.

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“Two hours of stay should be enough,” said Laura, the secretary, in a calm voice beside him. “They wanted you to flash the wristwatch. I believe

it would be enough for you to subtly sweep up your hair or something of the like. I heard that it's been designed especially for you, Mr. Miller. Do you like it?"

Laura glanced toward him, trying to read the atmosphere. The man, who had been motionless until then, lowered his gaze for the first time and stared at the jewelry that wrapped around his wrist.

The wristwatch was themed after the desert night. On top of the delicate craftsmanship that was characteristic of the brand, its elegant design drew the attention of the beholder. The brilliance of the diamond that circled the dial once every hour on the dot was especially eye-catching.

He began slowly. "It's not bad."

And that was all. Laura smiled stiffly. The man shifted his gaze back outside the window. He could probably see his reflection better than the landscape outside through the dark-tinted windows, but he would always fix his gaze at the window regardless.

In all fairness, it must be a lot more entertaining to stare at his own face than the streets, thought Laura. She had no choice but to accept the fact that he was a narcissist, and with a good reason to be one. She had been working beside him as his secretary for years now, but she still sometimes froze on the spot as if she had been electrocuted whenever she saw his face. Unfortunately, this was only applicable until this man showed his true colors.

Laura was always grateful that he didn't waste his words; he sometimes even went an entire day without saying a word. If that weren't the case, she would have long since run away, unable to bear his temper.

Chase, who was supporting the side of his chin with his hand as he leaned his head against the door, slowly closed his eyes. Thanks to that, Laura could admire his side profile to her heart's content. His pale face had a hint of exhaustion as a sharp shadow was cast along the elegant structure of his face.

Even before she was hired as his secretary, Laura had worked as a secretary of another actress. Due to this, she had seen countless celebrities, but she had never seen a man as beautiful as him. His shirt was buttoned up all the way to the top, embracing his long, delicate neck. Contrary to his neat ensemble, however, he seemed somewhat disorderly.

His fingernails that were planted atop his fingers, which were thrown carelessly across his thighs, were tidily trimmed. They suited his long

fingers very well. When Laura had first met him, she had imagined his graceful fingers wrapped around her neck, suffocating her. Luckily for her, no such thing happened.

There was nothing about him that wasn't pretty. Laura hesitated in using the word "pretty" to describe him, but it was difficult to find a more suitable word.

He let out a short sigh and opened his eyes. At the same time, Laura was pulled back to reality. The driver let them know that they were almost at their destination. Laura aside, even the bodyguard who was in the car with them grew tense. Now they had to protect this man from that pack of people. One wrong move and his life could be in danger. However, none of this could be helped.

The car slowly began to decelerate, and the man opened his mouth.

Laura couldn't register his soft voice. Assuming that he was talking to himself, she pretended not to notice as per usual. Chase didn't say anything else, either.

The car slowed to a halt. The way the crowd was cheering outside was alarming. Laura took a deep breath as she waited for the door of the car to open.

The bodyguard got out of the car first and quickly looked around before opening the door near where Laura was sitting. She exited as well and immediately stood to the side. People already knew who was about to follow suit.

An unbelievably sweet scent mixed into the crowd. Simultaneously, the cheering noise grew multiple times louder.

"Chase!" the crowd howled.

Just as Laura began to fear her eardrums would burst from the crowd's scream—nay, screech—he finally showed himself.

The man's blond hair fluttered splendidly under the showering rays of the Californian sun. He was six feet, five inches when standing tall, and the black tailcoat clung onto his slender body as if it were his own skin.

He stepped onto the red carpet and looked around once. A flash of exhaustion ran across his face, but the man silently lifted his hand. His soft, blond locks entwined his long fingers, and the watch on his wrist was revealed. The obnoxious roar of camera shutters poured out as dizzily as the cheers.

It only took Chase five steps along the red carpet until one of the security staff who was fending off the crowd gave in. The rows that were only just being held in place all collapsed at once.

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Chapter 2

Huge Accident at V&A Jewelry Event.

The cashier groaned as he read the article heading off of the newspaper that he had taken from next to the checkout counter. He didn't need to read the contents of the article underneath to know what it was about. The TV had already exhausted the details of this incident. Even the passersby in the streets, needless to mention the internet, were busy talking about what had happened. He didn't like that at all.

Just then, a customer placed some items on the counter needing to be scanned. After glancing at the pack of gum, the bottle of water, and the male-audience magazine, the cashier began casually, "Seems a mess. You know, what with Chase Miller."

"Well, sounds like it," the man replied curtly, looking fairly uninterested.

As the cashier scanned the items, he began to yak as if he were waiting for it. "So many people got injured. To be honest, I don't think people like him should be invited to the event. Don't you think? It couldn't have been difficult to expect something like this to happen. What's more, Chase Miller didn't even address the issue at all. And whose fault was it to begin with? Don't you think he almost enjoys watching people making a big deal about him?"

"Well, I don't really know much about pop culture," the man lied aptly. It wasn't a complete lie, though; it was true that he wasn't well-versed in pop culture. Above anything, he just wanted to finish paying quickly and go home. Just in time, another customer stood behind him, glaring at the cashier. The cashier hastily finished processing the payment and looked up.

The man was taller than he had expected. Moreover, the chest before the cashier's eyes was clearly tight and muscular, despite being hidden under the shirt. When he glanced at the man's face, which was positioned much higher than he had imagined, he jolted.

As he widened his eyes and blinked, the man put the items into the plastic bags himself, said a simple word of farewell, and left.

While the cashier blankly stared at his back, the customer who was standing behind the man began to complain, "Why in the world did that take so long?"

“Did you see his face? The man who just walked out?”

The customer stared at the cashier in awe. However, the cashier was still gazing in the direction where the man had disappeared toward.

He murmured, “He must be an alpha, right?”

The cashier marveled once again, so the customer scrunched up their face and stared in the same direction as him. “I didn’t smell his pheromones.”

“He’s so good-looking, though. He has to be an alpha. He’s pretty jacked, too.”

“Really? His back was definitely a sight to behold, though.” The customer belatedly took interest, but the man was already nowhere to be seen.

The cashier finally came to his senses and sighed as he scanned the items. *I hope he comes again,* he thought.

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I’m never going to that store again.

Josh gritted his teeth as he violently swerved in and out of the lane. Cars honked and curses exploded all around him, but he ignored them all and stepped harder on the accelerator.

He was already 30 minutes late. Why did the cashier have to dawdle like that? He had stretched out what could have been done in 10 minutes by making useless small talk. Moreover, the topic brought up by the cashier was something that Josh would much rather avoid. He had already been hearing various things about Chase Miller for days, to the point where he was developing a headache.

It was something that couldn’t be avoided even if he had tried to. Wherever people gathered, everyone talked about him. The soft drink that was dispensed at a push of the vending machine button had his face stamped on it. Whenever he turned the TV on, the news talked about him, and a giant billboard of his perfume advertisement stood its post by the road.

As long as he lived in this country, he could not turn away from Chase Miller.

Josh caught himself from swearing violently out of irritation and barely managed to swallow it. Josh had gotten quite a shock when Pitt had heard a

bad word that Josh had said and innocently repeated it. Since then, Josh always took extra care not to even accidentally let any inappropriate words slip. However, days like this were certainly difficult to endure not swearing.

He had to picture Pitt's face and hold it in with all his might. When he finally arrived home, he genuinely almost cheered out loud.

Josh skipped three stairs per stride and finally reached his home. As soon as he flung open the door, he called out for his child. "Pitt!"

Pitt, who was playing with the babysitter on the living room floor, turned his head and shouted back, "Daddy!"

"Pitt!"

Pitt reached his short arms out toward him. Josh promptly picked him up and showered his whole face with kisses. The satisfaction that welled up in his chest made it almost difficult to breathe. It felt as if the exhaustion that was piled up from the day's work was evaporating in a matter of seconds.

Only after indulging in a touching reunion after five whole hours of separation did Josh acknowledge the babysitter with Pitt still propped up in his arms. "Thanks for your work, as usual."

"No worries. Pitt is such a sweet boy, and it makes things very easy for me."

He was a university student who was working part-time as a babysitter to look after the child in Josh's stead. Josh gazed down at the ordinary university student who was at least a head shorter than him.

He smiled and said, "I'm really in your debt. It's exams soon, isn't it? Do let me know if there are days when you can't work, yeah?"

"Of course, Josh. I'll try not to cancel anything. I'll see you next time, Pitt," said the babysitter simply as he held the child's hand.

Josh paid the babysitter his daily pay, and he was finally alone with Pitt. Pitt loved climbing up Josh's shoulder and sitting on it; as usual, Josh began to prepare dinner with Pitt on his shoulders.

"Wah…! Ahh… baah!" mumbled the child inaudibly, bouncing on his bottom. It was probably the theme song of his favorite cartoon. Needless to say, that was just what Josh assumed.

Josh pecked the child's chubby calf and dexterously maneuvered around the small kitchen. He effortlessly grilled some steak and fixed up a potato salad, finishing off with some peas.

“No peas,” Pitt complained in his baby seat in front of the table as soon as he spotted green on his plate.

Josh began to cut the meat so that it would be easy for Pitt to eat while saying, “Peas are friends with potatoes. They’ll only be happy if they go into Pitt’s tummy together. Because they’re good friends, you know? You wouldn’t want to say goodbye to Jason either, would you?”

Jason was the puppy plushie that Pitt liked very much. It was a pretty convincing attempt, but Pitt didn’t back down.

“No peas,” Pitt grumbled.

His stubborn pout briefly reminded Josh of someone. Josh jolted at the hint of the similar-looking but much older man’s cold expression.

But it was Pitt who sat before his eyes, not that man. That man was not cute nor adorable like Pitt. Moreover, Pitt’s face as he looked down at his peas in disappointment was incomparably lovely.

In the end, Josh planted a kiss on the top of Pitt’s head and slid the peas that Pitt had picked out into the blender, pulverizing them without a sign. He then stuck out the empty plate and announced, “The enemy has been defeated!”

“Wawawawah!” Pitt cheered excitedly.

Pitt happily sat and swung his legs back and forth. Josh loudly kissed the child’s cheek and began to feed him dinner. Pitt’s mouth quickly became dirty with food. Without hesitation, Josh took out his handkerchief that he carried with him everywhere and wiped his mouth with his gaze fixed upon Pitt. Watching his small hand firmly holding onto and using the fork could very well make his heart burst.

Josh slowly paced around the living room with the child in his arms, waiting for him to fall asleep. When Pitt had fallen asleep, Josh laid him down on the bed, loosely cleaned the house, took a shower, and finally, took out a can of beer.

“*Phew*…” A content sigh trickled out of his mouth. He wasn’t financially unchallenged, but he had no qualms about his life at all. Just imagining Pitt growing up and leaving the house for university brought tears to his eyes, but this was something far off into the future. He finished the whole can and went to bed.

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When his phone ringtone ominously echoed across the room, Josh was deep asleep without even so much as a dream.

“Yes, hello… Emma?” he answered, still half asleep, before jolting up at the sound of his little sister sobbing. He quickly glanced at the clock on top of the bedside table and calculated the time difference. It was 8 a.m. in the West.

“Oh, Josh, w-what do I—”

“What’s wrong? Did something happen?” he urged.

Emma replied between sobs, “Mom collapsed, and… and we’re, we’re in the hospital now.”

“What? Emma, don’t cry… and tell me slowly. What happened?” Josh’s tone became harsher without him even realizing it. He could hear his sister blubbering on the other side of the phone. He forcefully shook his sleepily dazed head like a dog.

He pressed on with greater urgency, “Stop crying and tell me. Are you in the ER right now?”

“Y-Yeah… hnngh…”

Emma began to sob again. She usually had no problem keeping things under control, so it was rare to see her like this. Josh felt his insides boil, but he didn’t have a choice. Blaming the cruel circumstances for not being able to run to her and comfort her immediately, he waited patiently.

After some stifling minutes, Emma finally managed to regain her breath and began to stammer out an explanation. Their mother’s illness had worsened, and she had to be admitted to the ER. She also told him that her savings had run out due to the repeated admissions.

When she had laboriously finished speaking, Josh asked a little more gently than before, “Did you look into insurance?”

“I heard from them last time that they will no longer cover the cost of future onsets… still, I’m planning to pay a visit later just in case. I called work and let them know that I’ll be taking time off. I’m also going to look into getting a loan from the bank, though I’m not sure if they’ll let me borrow more…” Emma trailed off as she swallowed a ragged breath.

She began again, “Josh, I really… really thought that something might happen to Mom. Her hands were so cold, and she wouldn’t answer even when I called her name. Even her breathing was… back then, I really… nnh, hnngh…”

“Emma, Emma.” Josh raised his voice slightly and called out her name. Before his sister lost her cool again, he continued, “All right, just calm down. Mother’s okay now, right?”

“Yeah. They took care of the emergency,” Emma replied, her voice still shaking. However, it was clear that she was trying her best to remain calm.

Thinking about how terrifying it must have been alone made Josh want to fly over immediately. However, there was something else that he had to do first.

“What did the doctor say? Can she be discharged?” he asked.

“No, it looks like she’ll be staying for a few days. They also wanted to run a few more tests…” After coughing out a faltering breath, Emma asked with a mellower tone, “What do I do, Josh?”

“Don’t worry,” Josh said firmly. “I’ll make it work somehow. It must have been hard. Did you get some sleep?”

“No,” mumbled Emma feebly. The weight of her exhaustion suddenly carried over from the other end of the line.

Josh deliberately asserted, “You can rest assured. Now go get some rest. I’ll call you again later.”

Emma sighed deeply and replied very wearily, “Yeah… I should sleep a little. I’ll leave things to you, Josh.”

“Don’t worry and go. Careful on the road,” he added with concern before hanging up.

A sudden cold silence took over. Josh sat blankly in the middle of darkness, summarizing the conversation in his head. No matter what, the situation was clear.

They needed money.

“*Hahh*…” In the end, he wrapped his hand around his head and let out a deep sigh. However, he couldn’t afford to stay absent-minded. Josh quickly recalled how much money he had on him at the moment. All that thought led to was a string of curse words.

He was gravely calculating how much money he would need when he heard the child crying in the distance. He hurriedly got up and went to the other room.

“Daddy, daddy!” The child burst into tears as soon as he found Josh.

Josh quickly lifted the child up from the bed. From time to time, Pitt would wake up in the middle of the night like this and start crying. As always, the child leaned his small body tightly onto Josh.

“It’s all right, Pitt, it’s all right,” Josh comforted him as he paced around the room. The sniffles soon diminished, and the child began to breathe deeply. Josh planted a kiss on Pitt’s head.

The warmth of the child’s body always managed to calm him down. Hoping that it would do the same this time, Josh took a deep breath of his scent. The characteristic sweet scent of a child seemed to soothe his anxiety a little. In the end, he stayed up on the couch with Pitt in his arms.

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Josh knocked on the office door and opened it as he greeted, “Hello, Rose.”

Rose, who was filing her nails while sitting behind her desk, flinched. She soon beamed and said, “Hello, Josh. As dashing as always.”

Josh answered her usual flattery with a smile and let the subject pass. He had left Pitt while he was still sleeping, so he was feeling a little down.

‘Pitt will cry a fair bit when he wakes up and sees that I’m not there,’ Josh thought. This happened every day, but it still felt bitter. He wished he could stay with the child until he was a little bit older, but life stopped him from it. Moreover, today was the babysitter’s day off. Josh had left Pitt under the care of Mrs. Robert—their neighbor—before the child was even awake. This made him feel even more guilty.

Mrs. Robert, whose only source of income was her pension, adored Pitt in place of her own grandson whom she couldn’t see often. Although Mrs. Robert bought him toys and baked him cookies from time to time, Josh couldn’t leave the child with the old lady for long. He had to finish his business and go back quickly.

When Josh glanced toward Mark’s office door, Rose stood up from her seat. Her cheeks flushed ever so slightly as she said, “Boss isn’t in yet. You’re here pretty early, aren’t you? Would you like some coffee?”

Josh smiled to hide his disappointment. “Thank you.”

“Give me a second,” Rose said as she excitedly retreated into the break room.

Sitting alone on the office sofa in silence made Josh somewhat anxious. He looked around meaninglessly before shifting his gaze onto the newspaper that was placed on the table.

As he blankly stared at the face of the man who had taken over the cover page, Rose stepped out of the break room. “He’s the prosecuting attorney for the Davis Incident. Isn’t he so good-looking?”

She was talking about the murder incident that had happened in New York. The suspect was a wealthy alpha who, unfortunately, did not have a very good reputation. Those with money and power often became the public’s target—even more so when the suspect was an arrogant alpha and the victim a powerless omega.

However, what excited people the most was none other than the prosecuting attorney.

Rose sighed in awe and placed a cup of coffee in front of him. Josh muttered a brief statement of gratitude and took the cup to his mouth.

Rose, still unable to peel her eyes off the photo, murmured, “I wonder if this man is an alpha or an omega.”

“Who knows…”

Not transitioned betas, but alphas and omegas who manifested properly during their early teenage years were known to be very beautiful. There were some cases where this didn’t apply, but 99 out of 100 times, they were recognizably handsome or pretty. People could tell that they were an alpha or at least an omega just by looking at them without smelling their pheromones.

Even among them, a man this good-looking was rare. Even Josh had his attention stolen for a moment when he first laid his eyes on him. If he looked this good in the low-resolution newspaper photo, just how good-looking could he be in person?

When Josh reached this line of thought, he fell into a brief contemplation. This man was too pretty to be called handsome and too beautiful to be called pretty. In any case, one thing for sure was that the man was a charmer—enough to surprise people just from his photo alone.

“He couldn’t be a beta, right? Well, I suppose it’s not entirely impossible…” Rose, who had turned to glance at Josh, trailed off unconfidently. Josh must not have been the only one who didn’t have a clue.

In very rare cases, some betas were exceptionally good-looking. Thanks to this, Josh could somehow manage to hide his identity. Josh smiled as vaguely as always. Rose fixed her restless gaze onto Josh and quickly sat down beside him.

“I was really surprised when I heard that a good-looking man like you was a beta. I was so sure that you were an alpha,” she said, with a demeanor bordering disappointment.

Josh had heard remarks such as hers countless times in his life. Things like “I can immediately tell that you’re an alpha,” or “I can’t believe a beta as good-looking as you exists.” Unfortunately, both of those statements were wrong.

Josh was an omega—one whose ear was imprinted at that.

He had no particular reason why he should hide the fact that he was an omega save for his job. Regrettably, however, nobody hired omegas as bodyguards. Hence, ever since Josh started this line of work, he had pretended to be a beta.

It wasn’t difficult to hide the fact that he was an omega. First and foremost, people always just assumed that he was an alpha whenever they saw him. On top of that, his pheromones had a faint scent. He had no choice but to take meds during his heat since it made the scent stronger, but ever since he was imprinted, even that became much weaker.

He was confident that nobody would ever find out.

Josh almost subconsciously fiddled with his ears, but he faked it and brushed it off. He would be in big trouble if anyone found out about the imprint. He could pretend that he was an alpha, but making up a sloppy lie would force him to lie once more about why he had pretended to be a beta all this time. In the end, everyone would figure out that he was an omega.

His only remaining option was to do everything in his power to hide it. This was why he sometimes wore his bodyguard earpiece even when he wasn’t working or went through the trouble of covering his ears in one way or another.

I could very well be fired, Josh thought to himself. He felt chills run down his spine and avoided Rose’s eyes, pretending to drink his coffee.

Rose, who had no idea about any of his internal turmoil, gazed sympathetically at him. “How old is Pitt again? Isn’t it difficult raising a child on your own?”

“It’s not so bad, really.”

Everyone at the office thought that the mother had left the child and run away. It was a fairly common thing to happen in this line of work, so he didn’t even need to fabricate any details. All he needed to do was smile

bitterly, and everyone else did the storytelling. It was a fairly useful excuse until recently.

Rose's sympathy toward the "piteous single dad" began to turn into romantic interest ever since she had gotten divorced a few months ago. Of course, this wasn't at all favorable to Josh.

Ignoring Josh's clear rejection, Rose closed her face in. "But doesn't your son need a mother? Poor boy, he's at that age where he must be missing his mom… There hasn't been any news from his mother, has there?"

Josh scrunched up his brows ever so slightly. A night of sex, no strings attached, was one thing; he couldn't meet Rose's expectations in the way she hoped.

"Wait, Rose—this is too close," he warned.

His attempt to keep her back didn't stop her. Rose puckered out her lips even more and closed her eyes. She was definitely trying to kiss him. As her lips came very close to touching his, Josh blocked them with his hand.

Rose, who had ended up pressing her lips against Josh's palm, shot open her eyes.

Having met her eyes right in front of their noses, Josh smiled gently. "I don't want to see you and her fighting over me, Rose."

Rose jolted at his warm voice before squinting. "But she's not here."

"Well, who knows? She might appear any moment."

"You're teasing me, aren't you?" said Rose, creasing her brows.

Josh shushed her and whispered, "Listen! I hear footsteps coming closer. Maybe she's already here."

"What?" Rose exclaimed and turned around, unable to hide her disbelief. Just then, the door abruptly flung open.

"What is this? What are y'all doing so early in the morning?"

"Oh my!"

It was their boss who appeared, gruffly replacing his greetings with questions. Rose panicked and hastily propped herself up.

Josh sat up and greeted him back as if nothing had happened. "Hello, Mark."

"Were you waiting for me?"

Mark glanced at Rose as she hurriedly turned around and smoothed out her attire before walking straight into his office. Josh quickly followed after him and closed the door behind them.

“Phew,” Josh sighed exaggeratedly.

Mark, who was making his way around his desk, glanced at Josh behind his shoulders. “Why don’t you just go along with it? It must be hard for you to raise a kid alone.”

He was saying the same thing as Rose. Josh repeated the lie that he had already told countless times. “The mom will come back when she’s done with her education.”

“Yeah, sure,” Mark replied flatly and lodged a cigarette between his lips. Josh quit smoking back when he was pregnant with Pitt. He had never smoked since.

He stood as far away from Mark as possible so that the stench wouldn’t seep into his clothes and began, “Mark, would it be possible for me to get a payday advance?”

“Payday advance? How much?”

“...10,000 dollars?”

“Geh!” Mark suddenly began to cough violently. Josh grew so scared that Mark might stop breathing that he subconsciously recalled the steps for CPR. After finally regaining his breath, Mark asked doubtfully, “Did you gamble?”

“No,” Josh shook his head and answered honestly, “My mother is sick, and I need some money.”

“You mentioned that she suffers from chronic illness, right? Is it her blood pressure?”

“Yes, and kidney problems… a few different things,” Josh replied with hardly any emotion in his voice. Since he didn’t want to appeal to Mark’s sympathy, he spilled the words that he had prepared as formally as possible. “I’m also behind on some hospital fees… I do have a bit of savings, but nowhere near the amount I need. Is there anything that could be done by any chance?”

Mark silently puffed on his cigarette. Was there really much room for leniency at this small security company?

After a long contemplation, Mark sighed and replied, “...I’ll think about it.”

He didn’t say no, but he seemed very hard-pressed about something. Josh was curious, but he didn’t think he would get an answer even if he probed.

“I’ll take any kind of work… even if it’s just building security,” Josh reiterated before stepping out.

Mark grumbled, “How are you gonna get 10k just from building security work? Talk about realistic.”

Josh could only smile awkwardly before exiting the office. Behind him, Mark was still smoking with a serious expression on his face.

✦ ✦ ✦

The child, who had been under the care of Mrs. Robert, beamed as soon as he saw Josh’s face before pinching his nose.

“You smell like smoke, Daddy!” he reprimanded.

Josh quickly brushed off every corner of his body. Pitt waited until he was ready and stretched out his arms. Josh swooped up the child and rubbed his lips against his round cheek.

“Brrrrr!”

“Ahahaha!”

When Josh blew raspberries, Pitt twisted his body, unable to bear the ticklishness. The boy seemed to have been gifted a new toy by Mrs. Robert yet again. A small, unfamiliar car was in the grasp of an equally small hand.

When Josh glanced toward Mrs. Robert, she smiled and explained, “I just decided to get it. It reminded me of Pitt when I was passing by.”

Josh felt bad turning down her goodwill, so he smiled and thanked her instead. He didn’t forget to make Pitt thank her, too.

“Did anything happen in particular? Pitt wasn’t being naughty or anything?” asked Josh.

“Pitt’s a sweetheart as usual. I’ll be okay with you coming back later, even. After all, I very much enjoy the time I spend with Pitt. You’re always welcome, so don’t you worry about it,” reassured Mrs. Robert.

Her gentle smile showed that her words were genuine. Since Mrs. Robert, who was living off of her pension, had given Pitt a gift, Josh felt the need to return the favor somehow.

‘Now that I think about it, she said that her bathroom light had gone out,’ he thought.

Josh glanced past her shoulders before changing the subject and asking, “Is there anything you need fixing? I have today off and got some time on my hands.”

Mrs. Robert couldn’t hide her joy upon hearing Josh’s offer. “Would that be all right? Then, well, the bathroom lights… and the bathroom sink, if I may. The water won’t go down well…”

“Of course. I’ll be right back with the tools.”

Josh went back to his home with the boy in one arm so that the boy wouldn’t cry. When he returned with the tools in his other hand, Mrs. Robert was preparing to bake cookies.

Shit. With how things are now, there’s going to be no end to this, he thought to himself, but he had no excuse to refuse.

In the end, what started as fixing the bathroom lights ended with him tweaking with the living room chair. Pitt, who was watching Josh work, had fallen asleep at some point out of boredom.

✦ ✦ ✦

When he finally got home with the boy in his arms, it was already almost dinnertime. Mrs. Robert had offered them to stay over for dinner, but Josh politely refused because it really seemed like there could never be an end to it. Instead, he was given a generous amount of freshly baked cookies to bring home.

He noticed Pitt, who had just opened his eyes, reaching for the cookies just in time to quickly take them away from his sight. “Nope, dinner first.”

Pitt pitifully chased the drifting cookies with his eyes. Josh felt his resolve grow softer. Pitt looked up at Josh with a sad expression.

“Ugh…” In merely three seconds, Josh let out a defeated groan. ‘He may be my own kid, but how can he be so cute and loveable?’ he wondered.

He clutched onto his chest and handed Pitt a cookie, which Pitt accepted while bouncing on his bottom. Drool was pooling in Pitt’s mouth, and Josh wiped away an overflowing droplet from his lips with his thumb before hurriedly preparing for dinner.

I wonder when Mark will get back to me, wondered Josh. Even as he was feeding Pitt, all he could think about was whether he would be able to take out a loan, how much savings he had left, and if there were any other places where he could borrow money from. Thanks to this, he was unable to stop Pitt from dropping his spoon twice and had to take out new ones for him.

It was just as they were finishing dinner, which spanned an entire two hours, that the doorbell rang.

“Hey, sorry ‘bout the late visit.” Mark marched past Josh and into the house as soon as the door opened.

Josh followed after him, his heart racing. Mark had visited much sooner than he had expected. Pitt, who was sitting in the kids’ highchair and dipping his cookies in a cup of milk for dessert, became wide-eyed at the sight of Mark who had waltzed in.

Josh quickly approached the boy and kissed his head so that he wouldn’t be shocked. “Look, Pitt, Mr. Mark is here. Why don’t you say hello?”

“Hewwo…” Pitt greeted hesitantly in baby talk.

“Yes,” Mark murmured and ruffled the boy’s head before changing the subject. “Let me talk to you for a bit, yeah?”

As Mark directed himself toward the living room like he was used to it, Josh asked behind his back, “How about dinner?”

“Already ate. You haven’t eaten yet?”

“Well, it’s not a big deal.” Josh had planned to have late dinner while the boy ate his cookies, but talking to Mark came first. It was none other than his boss who had visited, and at a late hour at that. Especially with what had happened during the day, Josh couldn’t help but be nervous. Josh hid his nervousness and encouraged Pitt to eat alone before following after Mark.

“*Hahh*…” Even after sitting down on the sofa, Mark didn’t broach the reason for his visit right away. Josh intentionally sat a little further away from Mark as he waited for him to begin. The waiting time felt like forever, but he couldn’t bring himself to rush Mark.

Josh continued to wait silently, glancing occasionally toward Pitt. After a fair bit of time, Mark finally began resolutely.

“About work…” The boss sighed once again before continuing, “there is one thing. Well, the compensation is decent and the conditions aren’t bad. If anything, they’re very good. You could get the entire amount of the money you need, and pre-paid at that. The client said that they could give that much for the down payment just fine, and the remaining payment would be given upon completion of the work. Since the payment will be divided, that’s another good thing. There’s nothing to complain about, really. The terms are great, but… the client is who we have a problem with.”

Who could it possibly be for him to beat around the bush so much? Josh stayed patient and merely glared at Mark's lips. After what felt like a sickeningly long time, Mark slowly opened his mouth. When he finally put the name out on the table, Josh understood why he had hesitated so much.

"Chase C. Miller. You remember him too, don't you?"

The moment Josh heard his name, he forgot to breathe. Chase C. Miller. How could he ever forget that name?

The chilling purple eyes that looked down upon him, the natural blond hair that glistened under the sun, the flamboyant beauty of his well-defined face features, and the slim, long, elegant body that had seized his heart. The number one hottest actor in Hollywood ever since his debut, the man who had not failed to be crowned the number 1 sexiest man for multiple years now—Chase C. Miller.

The Extreme Alpha who had imprinted Josh.

The man who had impregnated him with Pitt.

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Chapter 3

What kind of bullshit… Josh cursed in his head as he sat on his bed, clenching his hair. He had been like this for the past few hours since he tucked Pitt into bed. No matter how much time had passed, however, his thoughts kept trailing back to the same conversation.

✦ ✦ ✦

"Doesn't sound too appealing, huh? That's how we feel, too." Mark's voice had trickled into Josh's ears from beyond his cloudy headspace. When Josh had finally forced himself to exhale, Mark had continued, "It's actually been about a week since we got this offer, but I was thinking about turning it down because I expected nobody to want to do it. Oh, but the contract terms are really something. It's not often that you get this much compensation… But after all, Miller cashes out like mad."

All he has is money and looks, so yeah, you bet. If only he were like 10 percent as kind as he was pretty, everyone would praise him like God, Josh had scorned internally, remembering the joke of the street that God must have put all his effort into making Chase Miller's body and just screwed the personality out of exhaustion.

When Josh kept silent, Mark had scratched his head vigorously. "But, well, you know… The work is a bit… Yeah. And that Miller bastard is real tricky to appease. I guess we've got nothing to say if that pay rate was offered with all of that in consideration. Otherwise, why would he be contacting us all the way from the west coast? All of them over there must have turned him down. Money's good stuff, but Miller of all people… I did contemplate on at least asking y'all about it since the payment was so good. But since you told me that you're in need of money and fast… The other work won't do you much good since the payment is down the ditch. If you accept the gig, the others might have an easier time making a decision, too."

Josh had taken a deep breath before asking, "Did you let all the other members of our team know as well?"

"I called all of them about it before I got here. Just the overall gist of it. They said they'd think about it."

Josh clearly remembered everyone cursing through their teeth when they had last taken Chase Miller's gig. Their receptiveness was both unexpected and remarkable.

Did something urgent come up for everyone else as well? wondered Josh.

As Josh fell silent once again, Mark had added, "It will be about six months if things get stretched out, and three months if not. If it happens to get extended, they'll pay you more accordingly. Well… think about it if you're really in a pinch. The entire team will be going if it gets settled, of course, so don't feel too pressured." Before taking his leave, he repeated, "Think about it."

✦ ✦ ✦

Since then, Josh had been hopping between options, unable to decide what to do.

Why did it have to be that man of all people?

The answer was obvious. There weren't many people who were willing to pay such a large sum of money to hire bodyguards. Moreover, Josh desperately needed the money that was rotting in Chase Miller's safe. Unfortunately, that was what reality looked like. No matter how long he contemplated for, the outcome was already decided.

As the sky hazily began to light back up, he finally managed to accept the one and only answer. It would just be six months at most. Once his contract period was over, he would refuse to extend it under any circumstances. He expected Mark to replace however many hands he needed after that.

Josh waited until Mark's reporting hour to call and asked what he was most curious about. "Did anyone else get back to you? How many people are confirmed to join?"

'There's no way that they all refused, right?' thought Josh as chills ran down his spine.

To his relief, Mark replied promptly, "Me, Seth, Henry, Isaac—four."

That was everyone other than Josh. As Josh's shoulders relaxed into a slump, Mark added, "That Henry, apparently he gambled his money away again. I heard he lost everything."

He also continued by telling Josh that Seth's contemplation ended when he heard the pay, and that Isaac had lent Henry money which Henry had lost, leaving him with no choice but to join. "Henry even poured Isaac's money into the gambling pot. In any case, Isaac's also partly responsible for being convinced by Henry's sweet talk."

Josh knew that it probably wasn't just sweet talk; there was likely some threatening involved as well. This wasn't the first time Isaac's wallet had been shaken empty after losing to Henry's vulgarities and threats.

In any case, this worked in Josh's favor.

Josh sighed bitterly and said, "I'll come, too."

"All right, five including Joshua." The way he articulated Josh's name made it apparent that he was jotting down the name. He must have already been expecting Josh's answer; he didn't seem too surprised or overjoyed. Unfortunately, it was an unavoidable decision for Josh, too.

Josh asked about a few important details like the date of departure, and they ended the call after concluding that the detailed contract would be sent over email. As long as he was paid the promised amount promptly, Josh really didn't care at all about the details of the contract.

After the decision was made, everything else followed suit. Josh called his sister right away and let her know that she didn't need to worry about the money since he had gotten some new work. Thankfully, his work was about three to four hours away from where his mother and his sister lived. It seemed like he could leave the boy in their care and visit him every day he had off.

"Don't worry about Pitt, Josh. Mom's also ecstatic to have Pitt here," Emma said in a livelier voice.

When Josh hung up, a sigh escaped his mouth. With this, the biggest issue was resolved.

'There's no way that man could find out about Pitt, right?' Josh thought to himself.

Josh became gravely buried in his thoughts. If the truth were to surface, he couldn't even imagine the aftermath. If he wanted to open up about it, he should have done so when he first knew that he was pregnant. It didn't make sense at all for him to confess now after all this time. How disturbing would it be to have his child suddenly appear before his eyes one day?

Hiding it wasn't difficult. Just like everyone else, he would also think that Josh was a beta. Moreover, he would never even glance at a lowly

bodyguard.

After all, thought Josh, *he doesn't even remember imprinting me and sleeping with me.*

"All of you belongs to me," he had said.

Josh remembered the words that he had forgotten for a long time. One corner of his heart ran cold, and Josh instinctively creased his brow.

✦ ✦ ✦

Since Josh had to drop off Pitt, it was decided that he would leave first before the rest of the team and join them later when they were starting work. Since he was about to meet his family for the first time in a long while, he also wanted to spend a few days with them.

He thanked Mrs. Robert for everything and promised her to stay in touch. She didn't hide her disappointment as she tightly embraced Pitt. After that, Josh pulled multiple all-nighters and barely managed to pack everything up before heading off to the airport.

When he boarded the plane with a child in one arm and a small carry-on suitcase in the other hand, the stewardess' faces showed mixed emotions. They looked up at Josh's face and beamed, immediately saw the child in his arm and flinched, and put back on their customer service smile. This went on repeat.

Josh sat the boy down on the baby seat and wrapped the boy's body cozily in a blanket. He gave Pitt a piece of candy, which satisfied Pitt enough to sit still without whimpering.

As Josh loaded the luggage in the overhead bin, he glanced at the boy's face. His round, puffy, tempting cheeks that bobbed up and down as he sucked on his candy naturally reminded Josh of him.

Was it because he knew that Pitt was his child, or was it because Pitt actually looked like him?

It wasn't like Josh could ask anybody to confirm this. He had no choice but to force down his uncomfortable curiosity.

The boy quickly fell asleep. As Josh wiped away the drool of melted candy from his mouth, he wondered, W*ould he recognize me? Does he even remember me?*

Josh subconsciously recalled what the man had said to him when they first met and knitted his eyebrows. Josh's image of the man inside his brain

was always the same: a snobby narcissist.

Most Extreme Alphas were pseudo-sociopaths, but those who manifested before puberty never got to experience the emotional rollercoaster ride of the so-called “juvenile angst.” This resulted in a very high chance of them growing up to become psychopaths.

In the case of Chase C. Miller, it was said that he had manifested past puberty. Thanks to this, he at least understood emotions; the only problem was that most of his emotions consisted of pure rage.

Apparently, psychopaths can also feel anger, Josh thought gruffly.

After all, acting was only possible for those who had emotions—or so he thought. Even the most beautiful of humans couldn’t succeed as actors if they couldn’t act.

Actually, with his looks, he could just stand there without even acting… Josh corrected himself.

Josh recalled the chocolate advertisement that Chase had filmed when he was five. When the advertisement, Chase’s debut work, was published, the entirety of North America went wild. Even now, that chocolate advertisement was still mentioned by people from time to time. The advertisement was that big of a sensation, and even Josh, who was just a little boy, had been enticed.

He had been truly disappointed when he learned that the actor was a boy a few years later.

Of course, Josh wasn’t the only one who was disappointed. The boys his age who had dreamed of romance with the little girl were basically heartbroken on a national scale. At the same time, they had all learned the one truth in life: one’s first love never ended in success.

Even now, it would be the same. Chase didn’t need to bother taking all that effort to memorize the script and act. It would be enough for him to just stand there.

At one point, Josh had wondered why this man even bothered to maintain an acting career. However, that was until Josh watched one of Chase’s works.

Chase Miller truly delved into his act—almost scarily so.

This was true even when he was just filming an advertisement.

“Oh my,” someone exclaimed softly.

Josh looked up. The passenger who was sitting across from Pitt was staring intently into the screen attached to the back of the seat. Through the

reflection of the monitor, Josh saw the man that had been taking over his head alive on the screen. At that moment, he was taken.

‘Yes, just like that,’ he thought.

A soaking wet man walked out of the fierce waves of the ocean. It was as if the god of the sea had taken human form and was gracing the earth with his presence. His long fingers that swept up his dripping hair, his deep purple eyes that stared directly into the camera, his lips that were curled into a faint, cold smile—there was no way that Chase Miller was a human like everyone else.

Feeling his heart plummet, Josh felt a strong surge of emotion. Sadly, unless his brain was completely pulverized into powder form, he probably wouldn’t be able to forget that man until he died. His thrashing heart was proof enough.

Somewhere along the line, the advertisement had ended and the screen had moved on to show something else. Josh, however, couldn’t peel his gaze off of the screen.

He would soon have to come face-to-face with the real deal. He wanted to delay that moment with all his might.

He closed his eyes and kept them closed in an attempt to look away from reality, but the plane was zooming toward California with no care for Josh’s wishes.

✦ ✦ ✦

“Josh!”

Emma, who was waiting at the airport for Josh, beamed and ran toward her brother as soon as she caught sight of him. Since Josh was holding Pitt in one arm and dragging the suitcase with the other, he just let his little sister embrace his body without trying to hug her back.

Emma took a few deep breaths as if to hold back her overflowing emotions before she looked up from burying her face in his chest. Their eyes met, and Josh was the one to smile first. Emma smiled back.

It was their first reunion in multiple years. Josh greeted gleefully, “You’re as ugly as ever.”

The touching reunion ended there.

✦ ✦ ✦

“Can’t believe nobody knows how annoying you are,” Emma repeated yet again, gritting her teeth.

Josh stared ahead in disinterest, sitting in the front passenger seat. “Merge now.”

“Shut up. I’m the driver.”

“Step on it, God damn it, that car is zooming!”

“I said shut up! For the last time, I’m the driver!”

At the same time, Emma violently swerved the driving wheel. Having merged swiftly, she glared ahead and cursed under her breath. She looked like she was one unwanted piece of advice away from plucking the driving wheel and smashing it on Josh’s head.

Josh glanced behind his shoulder. Pitt was anxiously rolling his eyes around. Josh smiled warmly and made a bird with his hands, flapping its wings. Pitt giggled and clapped. All the while, Emma continued to swear softly.

‘I’m really back,’ Josh thought to himself as he closed his eyes and enjoyed the rays of sun that showered over him.

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Chapter 4

Josh finally joined back with his team after about a week. Until then, Josh spent time with his family, shopped for a few things for Pitt, and prepared this and that in order to ready himself for his new work.

The house that he had returned to for the first time in a while was truly a mess. He was asked swiftly to fix things all around the house, and he ended up hammering things all day. On top of that, he mowed the wildly overgrown lawn, pruned the trees, quarreled with Emma, and shooed away the coyotes a few times. Before he even knew it, his vacation was over.

Although he had been spending time with Pitt all day for the past week, having to say goodbye to his child made his heart ache. The boy, who refused to let go of Josh with tears in his eyes whenever Josh had to go to work, clung to Josh's leg yet again, tears rolling down his face. "Daddy, Daddy…"

Josh glumly picked up the child and held him in his arms. When Josh patted Pitt's back, Pitt began to hiccup. Until now, they could see each other in the evening even when they were torn apart in the morning. This time, however, things were different. Since the team took turns to take days off, it was possible that Josh wouldn't see Pitt for as long as 10 days.

Not knowing when he would be able to see Pitt again, Josh was reluctant to leave. Josh held and comforted the child, stalling for almost 30 minutes.

"You're going to be late, Josh. You should get going," Josh's mother, who was watching them, reached out her arms.

Josh accepted with difficulty the reality that could no longer be delayed. He tightly embraced the boy one last time and unwillingly handed him over to his mother. Pitt immediately started screaming and flailing around. Josh turned away from the crying child, loaded himself into the car, and drove far away. His heart throbbed, and he thought he felt tears well up in his eyes.

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"Yeah. It's the hardest thing in the world," nodded Mark as Josh finally joined the team who were gathered in the restaurant for breakfast. Mark was

already a father to three children.

“It’s a good thing that my oldest is all grown up now. When all three of them were wee babies, it was so hard to get my legs moving. Janet really had a hard time,” added Mark.

Since the job warranted staying away from family like this for months at times, it was a relatable topic to anyone who had kids. Isaac and Henry, who were still unmarried, robotically munched on their pancakes without many reactions. Seth, who was living together with his long-term partner, was the same.

“Just coffee would be great, thank you.” Since Josh had already eaten, he just ordered a drink for himself. The waitress smiled and walked away. When she came back, she took out a great handful of cheap cream and placed them on the table. She shot Josh a secretive glance and left.

Henry spat, “Wear your damn ring, you cheating b*stard.”

Josh merely smiled bitterly in return. Isaac, who had just poured a generous amount of maple syrup over his pancake, put a big slice into his mouth and said, “You should tell us about the gig now.”

Everyone’s eyes were pinned on Mark at once. Mark looked around once. It was past mealtime, and there were barely any people in the restaurant. After checking that the staff members were gathered on one side of the restaurant chatting amongst themselves, Mark began, “The officials got a word about a month ago, warning them about C getting K’ed.”

C stood for Chase, and K stood for kidnapping. It was part of the team’s secret code. If the client was too well-known or someone whose information had to be kept especially confidential, the team had decided on a few secret terms in order to prevent words from being spread.

Needless to say, anything regarding Chase C. Miller was top secret. Chase’s code alphabet was C not just because it was his initial; it also stood for something else.

C for Crazy.

“The FBI is looking into it, but there haven’t been any direct clues. Of course, the informer’s identity hasn’t been found out yet, either. There are a few suspects, but…”

“Is it revenge?” Isaac asked, cutting Mark off.

Henry, who was sitting right next to him, immediately criticized, “You dumbass, why do you even bother carrying your brain around? If this was

about revenge, they'd never be able to find a suspect. Anyone who knows that bastard would 100 percent want to kill him."

He was right. Chase Miller was a superior being to the point where his mere existence could make people hostile toward him. One word shared with him, however, could easily turn that hostility into murderous intent. And nobody who was sitting around this table refuted Henry's statement. Even Josh just silently sipped on his coffee.

Isaac also must have agreed as he pursed his lips. However, his expression showed his discomfort. It was no surprise. Henry's harsh language was difficult to get used to even after many years.

Mark cleared his throat and continued.

"What they're assuming right now is that it might be the doings of either some extreme religious fanatics, a fairly large criminal gang, or a group of radical fans. Maybe it's all of them," explained Mark.

Extreme religious fanatics did a lot of wild, unexplainable things, so perhaps he was right. Radical fans also often tried to pull things like this. However, the other group of people was quite unexpected.

"Why a gang?" Seth asked before Josh could.

Mark replied as if it were the most obvious thing, "What do you mean why? For the money, of course."

As Josh thought about the unbelievable sum of money Chase got paid for his acting gigs and the huge wealth of the Miller Family one after another, Mark asked unexpectedly, "Do you know how much an Extreme Alpha's sperm sells for?"

"Sperm?" Josh asked back before he could catch himself.

At last, Mark turned toward Josh and nodded. "Yes, the child of an Extreme Alpha that everybody wants."

Chills ran down Josh's spine as his thoughts automatically trailed back to Pitt's face. He frantically took his cup of coffee to his lips in order to hide the fact that he had turned pale.

Meanwhile, Mark continued, "Word on the street is that three generations of your family could roll around in piles of gold if you just get your hands on the sperm of an Extreme Alpha. It's worth a shot for them. Besides, it's C's sperm. There's going to be a crazy amount of premium attached to it."

"But Extreme Alphas can control their insemination, right? Even if they force him to do the thing, they wouldn't be able to get any offspring with

it," Seth pointed out.

"Under normal circumstances, that is. That's why it's so precious," replied Mark. "It's not like it's impossible. Y'all know what happens when Extreme Alphas are unable to release their pheromones for a certain amount of time."

"They go insane," Josh replied automatically.

Mark nodded. "All they need to do is lock him up and leave him for a few days. There's no way for an Extreme Alpha who has lost their sanity to control their insemination."

Nobody said anything. The pheromones of an Extreme Alpha were the very thing that allowed them to perch on top of the social pyramid and gave them the power that they had. On the other hand, they were also a poison that attacked them when too much of it accumulated within their body. Due to this, it was normal for Extreme Alphas to regularly release their pheromones out of their body. This was the reason why the sweet scent that was characteristic of Extreme Alpha pheromones always lingered around them.

However, this only temporarily delayed the accumulation of poison within their body. The ultimate and simple method of solving this problem was intercourse. That was what justified their promiscuity. Using their pheromones as an excuse to bang multiple partners a day—the sheer audacity and the lechery—was enough to cross many people who knew about this.

At that moment, everyone recalled the frequent s*xual acts that they had all seen too much of while bodyguarding Extreme Alphas, and they all crinkled their faces and cursed softly. Josh was no exception.

"At least C doesn't host parties at his own place," murmured Seth. That was their only comfort.

Before they could get some relief from Seth's comment, however, Henry gritted his teeth and snapped, "How many years has it been since then? You also only worked for three or four months that one time. How the hell would you know?"

The mood around the table became gloomy once again. As many celebrities did, Chase Miller was also often surrounded by scandals during his acting gigs with the lead actress or someone else whom he was working with. Back when Josh was bodyguarding him, however, nothing much had

happened—perhaps because Chase had just finished his last gig and was resting.

There had been countless rumors about how he had just broken up with somebody that he had been dating, supported by many photos of his supposed ex going on dates with other men. However, Chase himself seemed quite unenthusiastic. For over three months, he never went on a date with someone or to a party to expel his hormones.

That was probably why Chase had completely lost it during his rut, resulting in such an accident with Josh.

Josh tried to think about it with a cool head. If Chase had proactively discharged his pheromones regularly, Pitt would not have been born into this world. Thinking about it like that gave him unexplainable mixed feelings, making his thoughts race.

*I wonder how he's been doing since then,'*thought Josh to himself.

Since he quit his job as a bodyguard, he had consciously been trying to avoid hearing news about Chase. Even if Josh tried to, in fact, it would have been impossible to dig around to find out about Chase's private life. Until now, Chase was much too far away. However, things were different now. Josh would be observing Chase 24/7 right before his eyes.

A belated surge of curiosity washed over Josh. 'And I wonder how much he's changed," he thought. He recalled the advertisement that he had seen over someone's shoulder in the plane. 'His attention-drawing looks are probably the same as ever.'

"A gangbang party aside, his personality is the shittiest of all," grumbled Henry through his teeth once again. Everyone thought the same and ended up losing their appetite. After that, they all silently sipped on their coffee and got up to leave.

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The huge mansion that Chase lived in was located at the innermost part of the country club, where the beach could be overseen. Walking down the stairs from the terrace led to the ocean. The entire area all belonged to Chase Miller, including the private beach. There were no other houses nearby, and all that could be heard was the regular splashing of the waves from afar.

“Welcome. We’ve been expecting you.” The security team who had been in charge of guarding the estate seemed visually relieved when they spotted Josh’s team and offered to shake hands. “It’s about time we took a break, but the vacation date kept getting pushed back. We were getting a bit anxious since we have our limits and whatnot…”

Gammas were usually the ones in charge of bodyguarding Extreme Alphas. The strong pheromones of Extreme Alphas sometimes forced betas and alphas to transition into omegas; this made gammas, who couldn’t smell pheromones at all and were therefore barely affected by them, truly suited to this line of work.

But even gammas couldn’t do anything about the pheromones that became absorbed through the skin. It was normal for them to receive regular shots to be rid of the pheromones that had accumulated in their bodies or take long-term leaves to take care of their bodies. This time, however, there seemed to have been an urgent change of plan.

“I ended up quitting the job, you see…” murmured the other team’s head officer. His troubled expression spoke volumes.

Mark replied understandingly, “It must have been difficult finding another team to take over since gammas are the rarest of all.”

“That, too. If we end up transitioning, we could die or have years taken off our lives at the very least—as you probably know already.” The team head sighed and continued, “Worst case scenario, if you aren’t able to find someone to take over, our team will be able to come back in six months. We’ll be leaving everything in your care until then.”

Josh’s team had been in charge of guarding Chase for a similar reason a few years back. Back then, unfortunately, the gamma who was in charge of bodyguarding had transitioned. This forced the entire team on emergency leave, which created a security hole. Hence, Josh’s team was urgently brought in as a temporary replacement.

It didn’t seem too different this time. Josh doubted that they would be able to find a team to take over in three months.

Everyone else must have thought the same as Mark asked, “In any case, we can assume a maximum 0f six months, right? We’d rather have a clear date, too.”

“Yes… well, it probably won’t get extended. Maybe.” The team head nodded, leaving a leeway of possibility just in case.

As Josh’s team followed behind the team head, they continuously looked around to get themselves accustomed to the areas where they would need to patrol. This meant checking out for any particularly shaded areas or places where someone might be hiding, places where they could secure a clear view of the general area, and any routes that someone could take to sneak in.

Just then, a woman met eyes with Josh and nodded in greeting. She was one of the team members of the previous security team who were now preparing to leave. She seemed quite restless as she walked by, busily talking about something with another one of her teammates.

They would probably all be gone before afternoon came. All the team members that could be spotted—without a single deviant—looked like they couldn’t wait to leave this place.

A faint sweet scent touched the tip of Josh’s nose. He didn’t seem to be the only one who had smelled it; he could see the other team members flinch. The team head, who was a gamma, continued walking nonchalantly, but everyone else was wavering.

“God damn it,” Isaac cursed softly from behind.

Everyone was an alpha other than Mark, who was a beta, and Josh, who was an omega. Even so, the temptation of the scent was strong to the point where even the alpha team members were bothered.

“What’s wrong, Josh?” asked Isaac, having seemingly noticed his peculiarity.

Josh quickly replied, “It’s nothing. Just a bit nervous.”

Did I take my inhibitors? he thought with his cloudy head. The only reason why Josh could hide his identity among his teammates until now was that his pheromones had a weak scent, and—thanks to that, perhaps—because he wasn’t greatly affected by alpha pheromones. It was even more like that ever since he had gotten imprinted. Both before and after, Josh never felt inconvenienced by the fact that he was an omega as long as he was careful about his heat.

Of course, this was all before he had smelled the pheromones of the very man who had imprinted him.

“All of you belongs to me,” the man had said.

For the first time, Josh came to realize what that meant. It was flabbergasting to think that the man who had told him such could sway him like this despite not even remembering it.

If he was affected this badly just from the lingering scent, he would have to take two, no, three times the meds as usual once he officially started working. Thanks to the imprint, Josh would be affected by that man many times worse than everyone else. He had already prepared himself for it, but he didn't think that it would be this bad.

As Josh desperately tried to ignore the dizziness as they walked along, the team head, who was walking ahead, handed him something. "They're candies that we like to eat. They should help dilute the pheromones that accumulate inside your body. I recommend that you eat those while you work. I personally can't really tell, but apparently, it stops you from smelling the pheromones because the scent of the candy is strong enough to mask the pheromones."

Everyone took candy from the team head's palm. Josh took three and put them all in his mouth at once. He was so desperate that he could even chow down the thin layer of plastic wrapping that covered the candies.

"Oh, they're spicy—" The team head tried to stop Josh, but he was too late. The tip of Josh's nose became rapidly sore and something flashed before his eyes. Tears welled up in his eyes for a different reason from before.

As Josh coughed repeatedly, Henry glanced back and clicked his tongue. "The hell are you doing?"

Isaac, who was walking beside Josh, worriedly asked him if he were okay. Josh nodded with great difficulty. The inner linings of his mouth were basically paralyzed, but at least it cleared up his head.

As they were getting a quick tour around the house from the team head, the team head received a message over the radio. He gave a short reply into his headset before turning around. "Mr. Miller will be here soon. Let's all head over together."

Everyone busily followed after him as he quickly walked along. They were finally about to meet the man. Josh's heart thrashed about scarily, and not just because of the quick pace. Josh wondered over his irregular breaths, 'Will he remember me? How much has he changed? Will he be the same?'

How will I feel when I see him again?

As they walked across the large front garden, the iron gate in the distance slowly parted, making a heavy sound. A black sedan emerged from beyond.

In there, gulped Josh.

Suddenly, the sedan came to a halt. Everyone rushed toward it in wonder. It didn't take long for them to learn the reason.

"A paparazzi," murmured Mark, almost to himself. When their quick walking pace turned into a run, the door of the sedan swung open. A man with brilliant blond hair slowly stood up.

At that moment, it seemed as if the entire world had stopped. Those few seconds felt like an eternity—perhaps because Josh had forgotten to breathe.

The first thing that entered his sight was a frigid blue. Beyond the aqua blue that reminded Josh of an ocean clearer than the sky, there stood the man.

Not only had Josh never even imagined anyone wearing a suit of that color, but he couldn't have ever thought that anyone could look good in one. And yet, the man managed to do both. Moreover, he looked so exquisite in it that some guy who didn't know his place could even get the idea of trying it himself.

His natural blond locks that were cleanly combed back, his long limbs, his tightly and coldly pursed lips—he, with his exceptionally pale skin, had everything to look as pure and innocent as an angel. In reality, however, staring at him made the beholder feel eerie as if a portion of their heart was being yanked out of their body.

The reason for this was probably due to his wintry stare. He seemed like he was staring at something, but really, his gaze wasn't focused on anything. They were a pair of empty purple irises.

He slowly scanned his surroundings with those eyes. His eyes seemed to have met with that of Josh for a split second; of course, it was just Josh's false impression. The gaze meaninglessly brushed past him and directed toward another direction, disappointing Josh.

As Chase sighed and swept up his fallen hair, his face was full of weariness. When Chase looked up, Josh noticed that he had lodged a cigarette between his red lips that were slightly ajar. Chase took the hand that he had used to sweep up his hair to his cigarette.

His well-maintained, rectangular fingernails that embellished the tips of his long and slender fingers entered Josh's sight. Red flames flickered ablaze, and the cigarette between his fingers tilted to one side. Its long, white body that had barely been inhaled escaped Chase's fingers and plummeted down.

Chase’s eyes suddenly became fixed on one point. Suddenly, he squinted.

“Mr. Miller—” began the head of the previous security team as he walked briskly toward Chase.

A series of camera shutter noises echoed sharply and abruptly. Everyone froze in shock, and Chase suddenly pulled his lips into a faint smile. For a moment, Josh thought he felt chills gushing over his heart.

The man began to move his legs. Everyone held their breaths as they fixed their gazes on Chase. His body drew an elegant line as it moved gently and gracefully, as though swimming in the air. He stared intently at one point and only one point. Nothing else seemed to matter to him right now.

As they stared at him, mesmerized, Chase’s delicate hand slipped inside his blazer jacket. He pulled something out.

Josh wasn’t the only one who realized that it was none other than the Desert Eagle that Chase Miller often used.

“Get out of there, you idiot!” yelled Mark desperately. The old security team rushed in, shouting. Chase stretched out his arms.

Josh thought he might actually faint. Chase took long strides toward the paparazzi, who was brave enough to still be snapping photo after photo without running off and pointed the muzzle at him.

Purebloods born between an Extreme Alpha and an Extreme Omega—the Miller brothers and sisters, who were all Extreme Alphas thanks to these genetic workings, all had nicknames comparing them to different animals. The oldest of them, who worked as a lawyer, resembled their father the most and was nicknamed White Snake after their father.

And the nickname of this man—the third child—was none other than…

Bang!

Mad Dog.

A loud gunshot rang. The paparazzi dropped his camera and staggered before falling to the ground. Shards of the camera which were flying in all directions and the bright red color of the blood were frighteningly eye-catching. Chase didn’t stop there. He walked toward the paparazzi, who sat pale-faced as he backed away on his bottom, and aimed the gun at him once again.

Having witnessed the Mad Dog of the Millers once more, Josh felt deeply in his bones that this man had not changed at all even after all these

years.

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Chapter 5

“What’re y’all staring at? Block him!”

“Please, no, Mr. Miller!”

“Run, you dumba*s!”

“What are you doing, backups? Stop Mr. Miller!”

Everyone yelled out in panic. It was true chaos.

‘F*cking hell,’ Josh swallowed his curses and sprinted madly forward. Back then and now—nothing had changed. While their task was to bodyguard that crazy b*stard who was shooting his Desert Eagle with one hand, they had to concentrate their entire force not on protecting that man, but on protecting the public from that motherf*cker.

This time was the same. It wasn’t Chase Miller who Josh and everyone else had to save; it was that shameless paparazzi.

Bang!

“Argh!” Josh yelled out as another gunshot sounded. It was a good thing he was able to somehow fling himself at Chase to snatch the gun out of his hand, but he had burned his hand when he grabbed onto the burning muzzle.

Isaac frantically yelled from behind Josh as Josh tossed away the gun, “Josh! Oh my God, are you okay?”

Josh desperately flapped his stinging hand as he turned around. The security team was surrounding Chase, trying their best to hold him back. Thanks to that, Chase’s agitated hormones were messily mixed into other scents. This came as a relief to Josh.

“Ngah… ahhh…” The paparazzi, who was still collapsed on the ground, burst out in tears. The ground was soaked with his leaked bladder. His head was dripping blood from where the bullet had grazed him, and his pants were wet beyond repair. As the grown man sat frozen, his entire body trembling and him sobbing uncontrollably as if he had lost his sanity, Josh felt irritation well up within him. Unable to contain the pain, Josh clenched his own wrist and looked down at the paparazzi.

“What are you doing? Get out of here quickly.” His voice came out sharp. If the man stalled any longer before Chase’s eyes, Chase would run even wilder. Even now, Josh could intermittently hear the bodyguards get smacked from behind him.

Daring to photograph Chase Miller’s private life meant that he was either a newbie who didn’t know how things were in this business or a dufus who was blinded by money enough to throw away his own life.

Once, a foul paparazzi who specialized in photographing naked bodies of celebrities had been caught trying to snap Chase Miller’s bare body. He was rendered bedridden forever. Since then, Chase Miller was crowned the number zero celebrity to avoid among paparazzi. Of course, Chase never had to face any consequences for that incident. If anything, the public began to reflect on how they had an exceedingly voyeuristic interest in celebrities’ private lives.

However, even though he was on the verge of death, the man continued to tremble where he laid. Josh became both anxious and annoyed. He grabbed the man by his collar and yelled, “Can’t you hear me? Get lost!”

The paparazzi finally came to and quickly crawled away, despite how unseemly the act. Josh subconsciously gritted his teeth. This must have been a learning experience for that man.

At the very least, he must have learned that he should never poke at Chase Miller.

The shattered camera was rolling around on the ground not too far from them. ‘The price of the camera is nowhere near the price for saving his life,’ thought Josh.

He glanced at the pitiful state of the high-performance camera that cost upward to tens of thousands of dollars. A little scared now, he slowly turned around.

Meanwhile, the scene had already been somewhat wrapped up. When the bodyguards noticed that the cause of the commotion had disappeared, they immediately stepped away from Chase. For the first time in a very long while, Josh came face-to-face with the man.

This is driving me fucking insane, Josh cursed in his head, coming close to saying it out loud.

Even without expelling his pheromones, Chase Miller looked like he could kill a man just by standing there.

As the purple eyes characteristic of Extreme Alphas shifted onto Josh, that was how he felt—and it wasn’t just because of the overwhelming pressure.

Chase’s eyes, which always missed Josh’s, were staring straight into him.

At that moment, Josh's heart began to pound scarily hard. Fear and intense agitation filled him. There was no way that Josh could smell Chase's scent as he had instinctively held his breath, and yet he feared for his life. All of it was an infinite stimulation for Josh.

This didn't stop at just his scent.

"You," he opened his mouth for the first time. When Josh heard his voice, he was captivated. As Josh stared blankly at him, Chase smiled slowly—a smile so unbelievably bright.

"Do you want to die?" he beamed.

Nobody dared to say anything. Everyone glanced around, trying desperately to think of a way to avoid the situation from escalating. However, no such way existed on this earth.

Struggling to roll the candy that remained in his mouth with his tongue, Josh replied, "No."

"Why did you do that, then?" asked Chase, still smiling brightly. As unlikely as it seemed, his smile was as refreshing as that of a teenage boy. The way he slowly and nonchalantly bobbed his finger, however, was far from it. Josh gulped at the sense of foreboding that he may grasp his fingers around his neck any moment now. If he were to say one wrong word here, he might actually die.

As ridiculous as it might have sounded, however, the thought of Chase Miller's hand taking hold of his throat was unbelievably alluring. If it weren't for Pitt, Josh would have gladly offered Chase his neck. Josh had to roll his hands into tight fists to hold back his dangerous impulse.

Thankfully, Chase's Desert Eagle was thrown sorrily on the ground far away from them. 'At least I don't need to worry about being shot to death,' Josh thought pointlessly as he desperately searched for an answer. In the spur of the moment, Josh blurted out, "I was concerned that you might get dirty."

"Hah?"

Chase scrunched up his brows. The other bodyguards also stared at him as if to ask what kind of bullshit he was talking about.

Feeling their gazes raining down on him in the silence, Josh quickly added, "If you shoot from such a close distance, the blood will splatter on your face. Your suit will also get dirty…"

Chase stared at him without a word, as if he was trying to figure out if Josh was being serious.

Josh forced a smile. “I assumed that you wouldn’t want to be dirtied by the blood of a paparazzi.”

The suffocating silence lasted for another few seconds before Chase finally opened his mouth.

“Bring it.”

For a moment, Josh didn’t understand what Chase was referring to. When he just stood there blinking, Chase scowled irritably and tossed his glance toward one side. There lay the Desert Eagle that Josh had thrown down.

Having belatedly realized what Chase had meant, Josh quickly walked up to the item and picked it up. While he bent his torso forward, picked up the gun, and turned around to walk up to Chase, the heavy silence continued.

Ah.… Josh exclaimed internally.

He saw Chase staring down at him and forgot how to breathe. He held out the gun with a blank expression as if he had been enchanted. Chase brought his hand up. Josh saw Chase’s hand grip the Desert Eagle. The next moment, Chase thrashed at Josh’s head without mercy.

“...!”

“Josh!”

“Jo—”

Mark and Isaac yelled as Josh tumbled to the ground before he could make so much as a noise. The landscape before his eyes spun and turned black. It was not until after that that he felt a twang of pain. Something viscous trickled down from the side of his head.

His temple was soaked in a matter of seconds, and crimson blood began to drip. As Josh lay prone on the floor, Chase opened his mouth.

He squinted downward and twisted one corner of his mouth as he said, “Who do you think you’re bullsh*tting, motherfucker?”

That wasn’t the end of it. He tossed the gun into the air and caught it with his other hand. Right away, Chase aimed his gun at Josh. Everyone stood in shock as he opened his mouth.

“Why don’t we see if your blood splatters on me or not if I shoot from this distance?” he asked mockingly as he pulled the trigger without hesitation. Josh quickly pulled his head into his arms. The bullet only just grazed him. Everyone around them exclaimed in shock, trying to stop Chase.

“No, Mr. Miller!”

“Run, Josh! Quickly!”

“You can’t do that, Mr. Miller—”

Chase gave no damn to their desperate attempts and pulled the trigger once again. Josh was sure that his head was going to be blasted away this time. No human in this world could run from a bullet.

In the end, Josh decided to glare right at Chase. For a moment, it seemed like Chase had knitted his brows together. However, it was too late for him to stop—if he had even intended to stop at all. He had already pulled the trigger.

Click.

A heavy sound slapped Josh’s ears. Chase’s face scrunched up, this time for sure. He repeatedly pulled the trigger, but all that returned was the despondent echo of the empty gun.

“Damn it!” Chase cursed as he flung the Desert Eagle away. Small sighs of relief emerged from here and there. At least they didn’t need to worry about him getting shot and killed by a gun.

Chase seemed taken over by anger as he violently ruffled through his brilliant blond hair. Nobody dared to say a word. Everyone stared at Chase in silence, unable to even gulp. Even at this moment, Josh wondered why he couldn’t peel off his gaze from this madman.

Finally, Chase managed to somewhat calm his breathing and messily swept up the hair that had fallen down his face. His sharp gaze suddenly pierced Josh once again. In the next moment, Chase had marched up to him and kicked him hard without notice.

“Josh!” cried Isaac, his face as pale as death.

Josh couldn’t even groan in pain. He curled up as acid sourly burned the inside of his throat. His pulse pounded like a ringing in his ears, and his sight became taken over by a spectrum of colors that turned pitch black before finally returning to normal at a very gradual rate.

Reclaiming his senses one by one with great difficulty, Josh’s vision came last; he saw Chase turn around.

“Load it and put it away, you piece of trash.” He was referring to his Desert Eagle. He had sputtered those words to a nearby bodyguard with such indifference, it was as if he didn’t care at all about what had just happened. He loaded himself back into his car.

The security team, who had belatedly snapped out of it, scattered about. A moment later, the sedan with Chase in it rolled across the front garden toward the mansion.

“Are you all right?” Isaac finally rushed in and pulled Josh up to his feet. Josh couldn’t bring himself to tell him not to worry. He placed his heavy hand on one side of his forehead. His hand quickly became drenched.

“Let’s head in and get you patched first,” said Mark as he quickly led the way. Everyone followed after him in silence.

✦ ✦ ✦

Josh tossed himself onto the empty couch and finally let out a sigh. Isaac, who had let Josh borrow his shoulder to walk all the way here, exploded with anger. “What’s the problem with that son of a b*tch?”

Josh pressed the bag of ice onto his throbbing head and slouched with his arm cradling his stomach without saying anything. Mark also clicked his tongue and shook his head.

At least he had just been beaten, not shot.

“Why would you say something insane to a madman? Should’ve seen that coming. If you had just said sorry and called it a day, you could’ve saved yourself from being beaten up,” barked Henry as he fetched a new towel to apply pressure to Josh’s wound.

Josh smiled unenergetically. “Yeah, I wonder…”

Henry immediately smacked him on the back of his head. “Why you smilin’, huh? Giving me butterflies and shit.”

“Henry, don’t!” yelled Isaac as Josh curled up more, unable to even let out a yelp.

Mark, too, joined in and scolded Henry for once, “Yeah, maybe avoid smacking him on the head for a while.”

“The stomach, too,” Isaac chimed in from the side. Fair enough, Josh felt as if his brain was bouncing off the sides of his skull like jelly.

When Josh let out a groan, Seth asked, “Do you really not need to go to the hospital?”

Josh nodded quietly. He suddenly started to miss Pitt like mad. If only he could kiss the boy’s soft cheek and pull his small body into a tight embrace, he felt as if all of this pain would disappear. As everyone sat in

silence, a series of knocks sounded from the door, and the previous security team head walked in.

“Would it be all right to continue the handover process? You know, it’s almost time for us to leave…” he trailed off.

He seemed to be looking away from Josh on purpose as he smiled awkwardly at Mark. Josh’s team all kept their lips pursed in the face of inescapable reality.

✦ ✦ ✦

“...”

The diner, which was normally bustling with noise, was only quiet around their table. As they sat around the large table, hacking away at the stack of food in front of them, nobody spoke.

“I wonder where they’re at now...” Seth murmured weakly, breaking the silence. He was referring to the previous security team, who had handed off their work and left with such freedom on their faces. The other members who had been considerate enough to stay a little longer to let them have their final meal from the outside world would also certainly and gladly be running off as soon as they returned to the mansion, happiness exuding from their entire bodies.

Mark took a bite out of his beef hotdog and replied, “Over the national border by now, maybe.”

“Must be nice…” Seth muttered to himself. Everyone could relate. In their heads, they had all bought a plane ticket to somewhere and were leaving the country. It didn’t matter where, as long as they didn’t have to see that man. Josh, in particular, had another reason to be desperate for this escape.

God damn it… No matter how pretty that bastard is, he’s just a lump of flesh like everyone else. I knew how big of a piece of trash that guy was, and I still got distracted at the moment. As a matter of fact, Josh hated himself for it. *Who knew I had this soft a spot for pretty faces?*

At the same time, Josh had to admit it to himself, no matter how hard it was to swallow the pill. He, too, was no better than a foolish teenage boy who had been rejected by a girl eating a chocolate bar.

“What would be a nice holiday location?” Josh murmured before he could stop himself.

Mark joined, “I always wanted to travel to Cuba. With a cigar, yeah. Sounds like a good a*s time.”

Watching him smacking his lips already, everyone began to chime in with a dream holiday destination.

“The Amazon sounds nice, too. Like an adventure, you know?” Seth said quietly.

Right away, Henry replied sarcastically, “No hot water and no internet? Yeah, fun.”

None of that man, either, thought Josh to himself. No man looked like he belonged in the city more than he. It was difficult to even imagine Chase Miller splattered on the floor, basking in dust, all the while wearing a creased shirt. If it were only Josh, he would have been filled with the desire to move somewhere far away from the modern world, the Amazon, or wherever. However, Josh had Pitt. He wanted to at least have Pitt finish his formal school education.

“How about Alaska?” said Josh. Seth stared at him as if to ask why the heck he would want to move to Alaska. Josh added like an excuse, “It’s quiet. Not a lot of people, either.”

“Would be perfect if you’re wanting to hole up in the middle of nowhere,” Henry replied as sarcastically as always.

Seth added, “Canada’s pretty rural, too. Why bother going all the way to Alaska?”

It wasn’t a bad idea. Just then, Josh remembered a detail that he had been forgetting. “Isaac, you’re from Canada, right? How are things over there?”

Isaac, who hadn’t said much until then, replied flatly, “Dunno. It’s been so long since I left. I’ve even forgotten how to speak Canadian.”

Everyone stared at Isaac. Isaac looked around in confusion before coming to a sudden realization, “Right, they speak English there, too.”

“Why do you even bother keeping this on your neck?” criticized Henry, pointing at Isaac’s head. Josh was about to suggest that perhaps Isaac had come from the French-speaking region of Canada, but he decided against it. Everyone knew that he had come from an English-speaking region.

Someone must’ve asked about quitting, as Mark replied, “We can’t quit unless you want to pay three times the down payment as penalty.

“Ughhh…” As soon as Josh heard Mark, a strained groan climbed its way up from deep within his throat.

“Shouldn’t we ask for more down payment? How are we supposed to work while getting beaten up constantly?” protested Isaac sharply.

Getting beaten up wasn’t the root of the problem for Josh anymore; the problem was the man’s existence itself. If it weren’t for that goddamn money, he would never have taken this job, to begin with.

If this couldn’t be avoided, why not at least get more money out of it?

Everyone was tempted for a moment at Isaac’s appeal, but Mark shook his head. “Better give up on that. Don’t you remember what the Millers’ main line of work is? And don’t forget their oldest son. It’s that Nathaniel Miller.”

Everyone, of course, knew that name.

The Satan of the legal world—a cold-blooded, stone-hearted vampire—a devil lawyer who had yet to suffer a single loss.

This meant that there was no route for escape.

“Y’all should all stay out of his way so that you don’t get hit,” advised Mark. Nobody said anything else until the end of dinner.

✦ ✦ ✦

Everyone seemed ashen-faced when they arrived back at the mansion. It wasn’t just because of the job they had lying ahead. Right now, they were about to go and introduce themselves to Chase as his new security team. The previous team head had remained here until the end just for this. Once they were to finish introducing themselves, he would happily fly straight out of the place.

“Let’s go, shall we?” the team head beamed as he turned around, contrary to Josh’s team.

Mark led the way, and everyone was about to follow when Isaac suddenly suggested, “Why doesn’t Josh go and rest first? He basically said his hello with what happened earlier.”

Everyone’s eyes immediately became fixed on Josh. Josh felt awkward and was going to refuse, but Isaac was faster. “He was hit on the head. He’s not showing any symptoms right now, but it’s probably better for him to rest up. So what if he misses the greeting? That b*stard probably won’t even bother remembering how many of us there are, let alone our names.”

That was true. Besides, Josh was probably just remembered as something like the bodyguard who got shot earlier and nothing more.

Perhaps Chase had already even forgotten that he had hit someone. This realization left a bitter aftertaste in Josh's mouth.

"That's true," Mark muttered in agreement with Isaac's statement. He seemed to consider the suggestion for a moment before nodding his head. "Yeah, Josh, you should go get some rest first. If you start to feel worse, you should tell us right away. We're just going to familiarize ourselves, so it's really not a big deal."

"Couldn't Mark just go alone to get acquainted as a representative of the whole team?" Henry let his black-hearted desire slip. He had murmured almost to himself, but his voice was loud enough for everyone to hear.

Unfortunately, the notion was immediately rejected by Mark. "Only Josh stays back. Everyone else is coming with me. We gotta do what we gotta do."

Henry's face immediately turned sour, but he didn't say anything else. Thanks to them, Josh could go back to his room first and rest.

Thank God, Josh sighed when he finally managed to pull himself onto his bed. His head continued to throb, but it wasn't unbearable. He would rather have it be so painful, enough to wipe all thoughts from his head. Ironically, however, his injury wasn't that bad. What made his heart even more heavy was the fact that it had only been a day since they had arrived. He would have to last as much as six more months… …under the employment of that mad dog, Chase Miller.

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Chapter 6

- Breakfast must be taken up to Chase Miller's room after calling each morning to check if he has woken up. Other meals shall also be provided upon request.

- Other than for the purpose of article 1, do not enter Chase Miller's room. If needed, permission is required via call.

- Do not talk to Chase Miller first. Even upon being asked a question, do not answer.

- Other than bodyguarding, do not go within a five-yard radius of Chase Miller.

- Do not walk behind Chase Miller.

- Do not walk in front of Chase Miller.

- Refer to the appendix for more details.

Josh held his fork in one hand and inattentively flipped through the papers with the other. The appendix was almost five full pages long. He had been told to read it over and memorize it whenever he had time, but even Mark, their boss, couldn't have memorized all of this.

"I'd be fucking insane to do this. I didn't even go to college because I didn't want to read," Henry had gritted his teeth and flung away the document that had been distributed. Nobody had said anything to him. The next day, however, he had been hit by a cell phone that Chase had thrown out of nowhere, which had ripped his forehead. Overnight, he had memorized the entire precautions by heart. Now, none of the members knew about the contents of the contract better than Henry. The article that he had breached was "Do not walk in front of Chase Miller."

"I was just walking!" Henry had burst out in frustration, but he was also within the "five-yard radius" when he had crossed Chase's path. Everyone had to stay on edge under immense stress. The articles in the contract were truly absurd.

"What are we, housekeepers? Why should we be taking his meals up to him every mealtime?" Isaac had exploded.

Mark had replied with a grave expression, "It's not like we can leave him to starve. Just take a look around this place. There are no maids, no nothin'. I heard that they all quit because they couldn't deal with his temper.

You really think he could hire someone new? Even we're only here because there's nobody else to take over."

As frustrating as it was, nobody could refute it. As everyone on the team kept their mouths closed, Mark added, "At least we weren't told to cook his meals. Apparently, there's delivery coming every other day, so we can just give it to him when it's mealtime. This isn't too much trouble now, is it?"

The article on meals was pretty ridiculous, but it was still pretty cute in comparison to some other articles. The very existence of Chase Miller was a calamity to them. In just one week, Seth complained of hair loss, Isaac lost seven whole pounds of body weight, and Henry had to get his forehead stitched up.

Josh had tried his very hardest to avoid running into Chase. Thanks to this, there was no particular incident, but he never knew where and when trouble could arise. After all, Josh was the first to get beaten up. He frequently revisited the document and diligently memorized the precautions.

Had it always been this bad? wondered Josh as he knitted his brows. It felt as if more articles had been added compared to a few years ago. He didn't remember exactly, but there hadn't been this many pages of tightly woven warnings.

He must be getting fussier and fussier, being a worldwide celebrity and getting spoiled by everyone around him, Josh scorned internally. In any case, he just wanted the gig to be over soon. In reality, however, it hadn't even been one month.

"Ugh…" Josh groaned and flopped onto the table. He suddenly started to miss Pitt. Perhaps he was napping right now. What if Josh asked to wake him up? He shouldn't, should he?

Feeling anxious already, Josh pressed the call button on his phone. When the connection ringtone ended and Pitt's voice came out of the speakers, Josh ended up loudly calling out the boy's name. "Pitt!"

"Daddy?" the boy yelled back, having quickly recognized the voice.

Desperately holding back the temptation to return home at once and embrace his son, Josh quickly continued, "Yes, Pitt. Have you been well?"

"Daddy… yes, Daddy!" Unable to hide his excitement, the boy stuttered, "W-when are you gonna come?"

After hearing Pitt's frantic question, Josh had to repeatedly roll his hand into a fist and open it back up in an attempt to hold back his surging

emotions. “I’m not sure… How’s Grandma doing?” asked Josh, changing the subject.

The boy’s voice sank as if he was deeply disappointed. “Yeah… I ate… I ate scrambled eggs for breakfast, and Grandma put in peas.”

“Oh my,” chimed Josh empathetically as he comforted the boy. “Good boys aren’t picky eaters. If you eat well, you’ll be able to grow really tall.”

“Like Daddy?”

“Taller than Daddy.”

“Whoa,” exclaimed the boy, “will I be taller than Uncle Mark?”

“Even taller.”

“Whoa!” exclaimed the boy yet again, before quickly withering down. “I no like peas.”

“Daddy will go defeat them all.”

“All of them, promise?”

“Of course. All of them.”

As Josh continued to listen to the child babble on, he felt as if all of his stress was being blasted away. For a while, Josh listened to the child’s directionless chatter, pitching in from time to time.

“Josh,” Seth called as he walked in. When Josh looked up, Seth gestured behind his shoulders with his thumb. “You’re up.”

It was time for patrol. The time had come to hang up. Josh suppressed his disappointment and began his goodbye. “Say hi to Grandma for me, Pitt…”

“When are you coming, Daddy?” the boy asked once again before hanging up.

Left with no other choice, Josh lied, “If Pitt eats all the peas and carrots without being picky, I’ll come back sooner.”

“Really?”

“Really.”

“Then I’ll eat anything. I’ll be a good boy.”

“Yes, Pitt. Daddy will be there soon,” reassured Josh as he kissed into the phone. As he hung up with a kissy noise, he met eyes with Seth, who was still standing in the same spot. Puzzled, Josh asked, “What’s up?”

“Well…” Seth trailed off as he tilted his head sideways. “You like your kid that much?”

Seth had been living with his partner for a few years, but they had yet to marry. They didn’t have plans for children, either. Josh smiled and gave

Seth’s shoulder a pat. “You’ll understand if you come to have your own kids.”

Seth shrugged, still looking like he couldn’t understand. As he took out a new plate from the cupboard and walked toward the stack of breakfast hotcakes, Josh turned around and headed outside. He was planning to walk around the entire estate, including the mansion, the annex, and the surrounding area.

Patrols like this were basically just a formality. Even if someone were to somehow pass the gates with the automatic security system, it would be impossible for them to not be spotted by anyone while crossing the enormous garden and making their way to the mansion. As long as Chase didn’t leave his house, there was nothing easier than guarding him on the estate. On top of that, the compensation was superior.

The problem was that it was difficult to find someone willing to take the job despite all these benefits.

Though it’s thanks to this that I was able to take the job, Josh thought to himself as he carefully looked around the huge mansion.

The private beach that stretched behind the large 12-bedroom mansion could be reached via a set of elegant spiral stairs. The sand began right at the bottom of those stairs, but the beach was always empty. Today was no different; Josh scanned the beach, absent of a single human shadow, before turning around and heading toward the garden.

Unlike the front garden which was well maintained, there was nothing much to see in the back garden. There was a helicopter resting alone in a spacious landing point, but Josh had never seen it used. Josh visited the personal gym, which had also barely been witnessed under use, the basketball court, and even the entertainment room, but there were no signs of people; only deathly silence lingered.

...*Huh?* It was at the large pool behind the building that Josh had found Chase. Lying comfortably on the beach chair and tanning his skin, he looked more peaceful than ever. The rhythm of his chest as it gently bobbed up and down made it seem as if he had dozed off.

However, Josh’s eyes widened when he witnessed this scene. The only things that Chase had over his body were his sunglasses and a tiny speedo.

Josh suddenly felt a sharp ringing in one side of his head. He instinctively took a couple of steps back. Chase didn’t seem to have noticed

the presence of another human being yet. Only after disguising himself behind the tree did Josh realize that he had hidden.

There was only one choice left for him, and it was to leave the place without getting seen by Chase as much as possible. He really wasn't in the mood for getting beaten up again.

Josh carefully poked his head out. The man was, unfortunately, still in the same spot.

Just as Josh confirmed Chase's presence, he despaired.

Why did that man's looks have to resemble his ideal type so perfectly?

The term "ideal type" was supposed to be, as the name suggested, ideal, not real. Even Chase Miller didn't fit Josh's ideal type 100 percent. There was a bigger problem than the fact that he was a man.

Josh wanted his ideal type to at least have the temper of a human, not that of a mad dog.

Josh was seriously wondering how much it must cost to make a wax doll that looked exactly like that man when Chase abruptly got to his feet. Josh quickly hid in surprise. Holding his breath and keeping undercover reminded him of the time when he was in the army. With it came the memory of his comrade with whom he had escaped the grasps of death.

Now that I think about it, he's also in California, Josh thought to himself.

Just as he came to the realization that it had already been years since he had last seen Dane, a sudden splash of water sounded from behind. Josh flinched out of reflex, but he didn't stand up. He habitually scanned his surroundings and remained still for a moment. It wasn't difficult to guess who had jumped into the water just now. He was planning to wait for his chance to bolt while Chase swam.

Unexpectedly, however, only silence followed. Josh froze his body for a moment and listened carefully. He was concentrating every bit of his senses, but there weren't any movements.

In the end, he couldn't wait any longer and cautiously poked out his head. He had a bad feeling about this.

Huh? After a split second of hesitation, Josh jumped up before he could even catch himself. He didn't see Chase anywhere. 'What just happened?'

Josh held his breath and quickly scanned the grassy area. He hadn't heard anything other than the loud splash when Chase had jumped into the pool. Was it not Chase diving?

Josh quickly turned his gaze to the beach chair where Chase had been lying, but it was empty as expected. When he shifted his gaze back onto the pool, Josh found him.

Chase had sunk deep into the water.

He could have just been diving underwater, but he wasn't moving at all. Josh had seen something like this before—someone lying face-down underwater—back when he had worked as a pool lifeguard for a while. It was just before someone had been drowning to death.

"Mr. Miller!" Josh frantically rushed out of his hiding spot. He had shouted out loud for Chase, but there was no response. Josh called out Chase's name once again before concluding that Chase had lost consciousness.

He had no time to even recall the don't do articles that were written in the contract. One wrong move and Chase would be dead. Josh's body moved before he could think. Without even bothering to take off his shoes, Josh jumped into the water with a large splash.

With just a few strokes, Josh reached the middle of the pool where Chase was drowning. Even until then, Chase didn't move at all.

Perhaps he had hit his head on the bottom when he dived. Thinking about all kinds of possible situations in his head, Josh grabbed Chase and pulled him toward himself. He was just about to drag Chase out of the water, hugging Chase's head with his arm.

Suddenly, Chase opened his eyes. Their eyes met immediately, before Josh could even prepare himself. Josh blinked his eyes in confusion.

Was he not drowning?

A rough estimation of time told Josh that Chase had been underwater for at least a full minute. If Chase had been lying underwater like that even before Josh had noticed, it would have been much longer than that.

However, Chase didn't seem to be out of breath at all. He merely scrunched up his brow, seemingly disgusted by the arm that was holding his head. Flustered, Josh let go of him. "I-I'm sorry."

Chase didn't say anything in response to Josh's speedy apology. All he did was stare. Josh awkwardly swept back his wet hair. The two of them stayed submerged in water, floating while staring at each other. Josh began to feel the weight of his drenched clothes. Thinking that he should get out of the pool, Josh frantically searched for his next words.

“Um, well… I’ll be taking my leave, then,” Josh smiled uncomfortably. Chase squinted. Josh couldn’t understand what his expression meant at all.

Am I allowed to leave? he wondered as he blinked slowly in confusion.

Chase abruptly opened his mouth. “Do you really wish to die this time?”

“Pardon me?” Josh asked back, having not understood the meaning behind his question fast enough. Suddenly, Chase stretched out his arm.

Josh wasn’t even given the time to cry out. Chase grabbed Josh’s head right away and rammed it underwater.

“...!” Water splashed in all directions with a loud splash. Gulping down the pool water, Josh flailed around. The intense rays of the Californian sun refracted in the water, hurting his eyes. However, what was more dangerous was Chase’s hand, which was pressing down on him from above.

Chase was over six feet tall and quite slim. He only had a moderate amount of muscles, so “buff” wasn’t a suitable descriptor for him. He had a slender body that looked incredibly gracious in a suit.

Although Chase was taller than Josh, he looked like he had much less muscle mass than Josh. And yet, where did all this terrifying power come from? Josh felt as if he were actually going to die at this rate, but he couldn’t bring himself to escape Chase’s grasp.

Josh frantically reached his arm out. If he didn’t drag this man underwater, he would be the one crossing the Styx. He desperately moved around to protect his own life. Just as the oxygen inside his body was about to run out, Josh felt Chase’s arm on the tips of his fingers. Right away, he grabbed onto it and dragged it down.

“Pfah!” Josh finally shook himself free of Chase’s grip and poked his head out of the water. He quickly tried to swim away in case Chase tried to attack again, but his body did not want to move as easily as he wanted it to. As Josh hastily cycled through his swimming strokes, Chase stretched his arm out from behind. Chase grabbed Josh’s hair and Josh was dragged back down underwater.

He gasped for air to no avail as his entire body was wrung out by the sensation of his lungs being bloated. Fear of death filled his head. He tried to escape, but Chase grabbed onto him and didn’t let go.

Josh’s breathing became even more ragged due to terror. Watching Josh’s face turn blue, Chase smiled coyly.

Josh realized then that this man truly intended to kill.

As this realization hit him, Pitt’s face flew by his eyes. Josh grabbed Chase’s wrist with superhuman strength. Chase, of course, didn’t budge at all. However, as Josh continued to apply pressure on his veins, his grip strength lessened. Josh took this opportunity to hastily rise above the water.

Chase was still in the water. However, the bright sun and the clear water showed Chase’s movements very visibly. Josh saw Chase swim closer and quickly backed away.

Again, this motherfucker— Josh cursed internally.

Josh was confident in his swimming abilities. He desperately moved his arms faster than ever and swam toward the edge of the pool. He could spare no time for hesitation. He placed his hand on the ground and pushed himself up. Only after he had completely escaped to the ground did he feel relieved.

“Mmph, urgh!” Josh finally came to after heaving and coughing out some water a few times. He had no energy left in his body. His consciousness was hazy as if he had just come back from the dead. As he huffed and puffed, he turned around to find Chase still at the same spot—as if he had never intended to chase him.

Josh sighed and spat out a jagged breath. He could finally speak only after a few more coughing fits. “What do you think you’re doing? Are you mad?”

Chase didn’t seem affected at all by Josh’s aggressive outcry. In fact, he smiled. “You touched my body without permission.”

“...!” Josh had to clench his teeth to prevent a tsunami of profanities from escaping his mouth. Unable to do anything with his right fist, he swung it in the air before shouting back a moment later, “I thought you were drowning—dying!”

Despite Josh’s protest, Chase remained brazen. “I never asked you to save me.”

This time, Josh didn’t hold back. Rage filled him to the brim as he howled, “Then why the fuck did you hire bodyguards? You should’ve just died on your own, you fucking nutjob!”

Chase was still calm, despite Josh’s explosion of rage. Sweeping back his dripping hair that had slid onto his face with his long fingers, Chase laughed briefly like usual—much too calmly. “It’s not so easy to die, thanks to pricks like you who ruin the chance.”

“Oh, like me, the one you hired precisely so that I could ruin the chance?”

At that moment, Chase’s faze froze over like a mask. However, Josh couldn’t care less about that right now. He punched the tree beside him hard. “If you want to die, die where nobody can see you so that you succeed for sure! Fucking son of a bitch!”

Josh once again yelled out “Fuck!” before immediately turning around and storming off. His shoes must have come off underwater, as he could feel the grass under his wet socks. No sound came from behind him. He didn’t care about what kind of face Chase was making, nor what kind of insane act he was pulling.

Josh gritted his teeth and continued walking. He wished he could walk all the way to the other side of the Earth.

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“What did I say about not crossing him and saving yourself?” cried Mark as soon as he laid eyes on Josh, who was still drenched.

Isaac asked worriedly, “Are you okay? Are you hurt anywhere?”

Josh simply nodded in response. He had drunk so much water, his innards were turning upside down. Just as he puked out some more water mixed with stomach acid, Isaac quickly placed a trash can under his chin.

“Thanks,” Josh squeaked in gratitude, wiping away at his mouth with the back of his hand.

Isaac, his face still dark, murmured, “It’s fine.”

Seth, who had been silently watching Josh roughly dry his hair with the towel that Isaac had fetched from somewhere, spoke up. “Was there a term in the contract that allowed for violence against the bodyguards? I don’t remember seeing anything like that.”

Others aside, Seth was the kind of person to have examined the contract down to every word. Everyone stared with hopeful eyes.

Mark replied, “It says that any accidents that happen to us on the job are our responsibility.”

“Hah,” exclaimed Seth. Did this count as an “accident” as well? There was no way for Josh to know, but Chase Miller’s lawyer could certainly squirm out of it with all kinds of wordplay.

They should never have signed the contract.

As the same thought filled everyone's heads, Henry entered the room. "What the hell did you do to end up like that again?" Nobody said anything to him as he clicked his tongue. Henry smirked and flopped loosely onto a chair. "Gotta take care of your own body, you know. There has to be a reason for getting paid this much."

This time, everyone's eyes shifted to Henry. He oddly seemed to be in a good mood. Isaac asked quietly, "You won some money?"

Henry smiled widely and took out multiple 100-dollar notes from his back pocket. "The cards were surely in my favor today."

"Ahem," Mark cleared his throat. When he had gotten everyone's attention, he began, "This is important. About C's schedule…"

Everyone fell silent, feeling the seriousness in the air. Mark looked around at his teammates and continued, "He's going to be out next week."

"Out?" Seth asked back.

Mark rubbed between his eyebrows as if he were getting a headache. "Yes. It's not a sudden schedule—it had been planned for a while. Gotta go get his costumes for the upcoming movie shoot."

Josh vaguely recalled hearing some things about it. The movie had an insane budget, and the novel on which the movie was based was an old series with a huge fanbase. Chase, who was expected to take on the role of the protagonist at first, ended up being cast as the antihero—the antagonist of the series.

"We'll have to take extra care in bodyguarding him, then…" Seth muttered blankly. Everyone could relate. There were many protection systems installed in the mansion—security cameras, per se—but once they were outside, the bodyguards quite literally had to cover the entire area with their bare bodies.

The biggest problem was Chase Miller himself. Having witnessed his countless moments of insanity, the entire team felt chills running down their spines.

"In fact, there had been an incident not too long ago," said Mark, looking quite troubled. "The perpetrator was someone from a religious organization with hostile ideologies toward Extreme Alphas. Keith Pittman was the victim of that terror.

"The… err… CEO of P Entertainment?" asked Seth. Pittman was the CEO of the production company in charge of producing the movie that Chase would be acting in. He was also an Extreme Alpha, and he was the

very person who made Chase play the antihero rather than the hero, which had been the initial assumption.

Mark nodded. “So the word about C being threatened isn’t just a bluff. Moreover, I heard that some fans got into the broadcasting company building where C was at last time. Heard it was mayhem.”

“Um… should we try using the Scrum framework?” Isaac suggested unconfidently.

Henry gritted his teeth and spat, “Just shut up and stay put, you idiot.”

Isaac hadn’t said anything that warranted such a harsh response, but he had certainly spoken without reading the atmosphere. Josh decided not to comfort Isaac. Seth, too, pretended not to hear them and turned away.

Mark sighed and continued, “We should first decide on who’s going to bodyguard while C does their thing, and the rest will be surveying the building for a route…”

“I’ll survey the area,” Josh grabbed for the opportunity quicker than anyone else. Mark nodded and selected Josh, Isaac, and himself as the surveying team, and chose Seth and Henry as Chase’s bodyguarding team.

“Are you just trying to fuck me over, Mark?” Henry protested right away, but it fell flat. Somebody had to do it, and it didn’t matter to everyone else as long as it wasn’t them doing the job. In the end, Henry was left with no choice but to accept his mission with transparent anger on his face.

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Chapter 7

On the morning of the schedule, everyone seemed incredibly nervous. They needed to be on a many times stronger guard than their usual gigs. After all, the client had been receiving threats of kidnap and even death—no matter how unreal it felt.

Having witnessed him shooting a Desert Eagle with one hand and thoroughly punishing those who crossed his way, Josh didn't think Chase needed any bodyguarding. Perhaps the only reason why he had hired them at such a high cost was because he didn’t want to deal with the lowly mortals or because he just wanted someone to beat up for fun. At the very least, that was what Josh, full of sarcasm, thought.

Everyone was equipped with a gun in case of an emergency. Josh frowned as he carried out some maintenance on his Glock. Chase Miller looked like he could stab a person to death using a butter knife; why did he even bother carrying around that hefty gun?

Swallowing his curses that were swimming up his throat yet again, Josh stood up. It was time to do some maintenance on the car as well.

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“You put in a request for extra security?” asked Josh, slamming close the hood of the car that they were to be riding in.

Mark let out a short sigh and nodded. “Yes, though it was shot down with no mercy.”

“I assume it wasn’t because of the cost.”

“Of course not,” Mark confirmed readily. “Since it’s so hard to find people who are up for the job, I was thinking about getting some guard dogs. I thought I was going to get hit. Who knew he’d be so angry? He glared at me and I had to admit, he could literally kill with his eyes. Got cold feet immediately.”

It was common to work with some trained aggressive dogs, but it was impossible in the case of Chase Miller. There were many things he didn’t like, and dogs in particular threw him into a fit of anger.

Mark’s courage in even suggesting to use dogs was worthy of praise, even though it had resulted in clean failure. Mark grumbled, “I don’t get

why he hates dogs that much. Isn’t a dog supposed to be a man’s best friend?”

It was a mystery to Josh as well, but he had no way of knowing the answer. He just assumed that dogs were one of the many things that this fussy man hated. Instead of pressing on, Josh changed the subject and asked, “Was that all that happened?”

“Yeah,” Mark nodded before quietly muttering, “Who knows what goes on inside that bastard’s head? He’d be asking some weird things, but he doesn’t even care about the important stuff.”

“Asking weird things?” Josh asked in confusion.

Mark nodded. “When we first went to say hello, he wanted to check our team member profiles. I didn’t think he would care about something like that.”

Checking for criminal records or something, maybe?’ Josh thought to himself, but Mark’s answer was completely unanticipated.

“He wasn’t saying anything, and then he suddenly asked if everyone on the team were alphas and betas.” As Josh stared intently, Mark continued nonchalantly, “So I told him that you and I are betas and everyone else are alphas. After that, he didn’t seem to care about anything else.”

“...Is that so?” Josh chimed in, pretending to be calm.

Mark let out an airy laugh. “A face like yours should be an alpha. Even C didn’t seem to believe it. He asked if the one that he beat to a pulp was really a beta, twice.”

It was something Josh had been told all his life, and Josh was grateful for this misunderstanding—especially at times like this. “I like being a beta.”

“Well, yeah. With your face, what does it matter?” Mark smirked offhandedly as he lodged a cigarette in his mouth. Josh didn’t say anything and continued to complete the final maintenance.

Whenever Chase Miller went somewhere, there were at least 10 people who accompanied him. Aside from bodyguards, he had a personal secretary who managed his schedules and ran some errands here and there, a manager, some stylists, and sometimes even the secretary of the secretary. This time was no different; there were three vehicles in total, including a van, and this was after reducing the number of people involved as much as possible.

It was also a part of Josh's job to examine all the vehicles one by one and check if there was anything out of place.

"One of the wheels looked like it was leaking air, so I changed it out. Other than that, everything looks good," Josh reported indifferently.

Mark blinked his eyes in amazement. "Even a car that costs 100k-plus gets leaky wheels, huh."

"Even a certain actor who's worth a couple hundred million has a crappy personality," Josh blurted out without thinking.

Suddenly, chills ran down his spine. When he hurriedly turned around, he met eyes with Chase, who was walking out of the mansion.

It was the first time they had come face-to-face ever since that day, as—unsurprisingly—Josh went out of his way to ardently avoid Chase. After all, he did not want his life to be under threat again.

Chase was dressed fairly loosely today with no tie. Two or so of his shirt buttons were undone, and a light jacket hung over his shoulders. As usual, an order-made watch glistened brightly on his wrist.

Josh had once searched up the store since the brand had caught his eye.

Remembering how he had given up on the whole idea after seeing that the watch cost more than his salary, Josh quickly took a step back. Chase must have heard what Josh had been saying behind his back, and yet he showed no particular reaction. He simply marched down the front steps and toward the car with no change of expression.

With an unlit cigarette wedged between his lips, he roughly swept up his hair. He seemed to be in an irritable mood with his faintly creased brow.

"I had a very hard time dragging him out here. It's warfare trying to take him to work every time…" the manager complained between sighs to one of the secretaries in the distance. Josh furtively pulled out a candy from his pocket and popped it into his mouth.

Mark held open the car door as Chase slid into the vehicle. Despite the fact that there was a considerable distance between them and Josh, a faint sweet scent tickled the tip of his nose. Josh desperately rolled his tongue around to melt the candy faster.

Seth and Henry, who were responsible for bodyguarding, would be riding in the same car as Chase. Josh walked over to the car right behind the one Chase had gotten into and opened the driver's seat door as he buried Chase's lingering scent under the flavor of the candy.

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The costume designer's office was almost two hours away by car. As they reached their destination among the forest of tall buildings, the tension in the air thickened.

"*Hahh*…" Isaac, who was sitting next to Josh, took a few audible deep breaths. With his face hardened as well, Josh stepped out of the car. He scouted the surroundings with his eyes before holding open the door of the front car. Mark got out first and looked around once before stepping aside.

Before the man's body could be seen, his scent was the first to take over their surroundings. His unbearably sweet scent made Josh's heart beat as hard as ever, while simultaneously making Josh overcome with shame. He almost took his hand to the part of his ear that he had hidden behind his in-ear monitor. As long as he had the imprint, he would continue to have butterflies in his stomach, despite knowing that the man was but a large piece of trash.

Feeling pathetic, Josh stared at Chase as he got out of the car. The man, who had a perfect shell at the very least, proceeded to stretch his back. Their eyes seemed to have met for a split second, but perhaps it was just a misperception;

Chase walked past Josh and headed into the building.

"Wait, actually?"

"Is this real?"

Exclamations of surprise echoed from around them. They were expected reactions of the people who had recognized Chase, and everyone including Josh quickly surrounded Chase. They hurried into the building, but there was already a crowd of people who were snapping photos everywhere.

I have a bad feeling about this, Josh thought to himself.

As if he had read Josh's thought, Mark ordered, "We better properly restrict the area. Check for any back doors or emergency exits that we could use to get out in the worst-case scenario."

"I'll find the staff member in charge of management and ask if they have a blueprint of the building," Josh replied promptly.

Mark nodded. After assigning everyone with their respective tasks, he quickly paced after Chase. Even in that moment, more and more people were gathering outside the building.

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Obtaining the blueprint was easy. Thanks to the endorsement of the manager who had accompanied Josh, the management officer confirmed Josh's identity and showed him the blueprint. Josh quickly looked over the building through the screen and contacted Mark right away.

"The blueprint is saved on the computer in the monitoring room. I have it pulled up right now. Would you like to come and see it?" Josh reported.

"Sounds good," replied Mark. "Apparently, it will take them at least an hour from now to get things done. Check if there are any suspicious signs of activity throughout the building, including the emergency exits that are shown on the blueprint. Isaac, you start at the top floor and make your way down." After ordering Isaac, who was with Mark, he told Josh, "You heard me, right? You make your way up from downstairs."

Josh hung up and explained to the management officer about Mark before leaving the room. The rest of his task was simple. All he had to do was plan out an exit route for after the photoshoot—which hallways to pass, how they should exit the building, where the car should be parked, and how they should get Chase into the car and to the mansion safely. After that, he just needed to head over to the monitoring room and share his thoughts with Mark.

It's just trying on some costumes. Why does everything have to be so complex? Josh grumbled to himself as he scrunched up his brow, but he already knew the answer. The act of leaving the mansion already put Chase at risk. As long as he didn't do anything insane, everyone would want to make that man theirs.

Josh remembered the fact that Chase Miller was a narcissist, and he was convinced. Even he, who was often told that he was handsome or good-looking, felt very ordinary compared to Chase.

That bastard would never be able to love anyone other than himself, Josh thought as he opened the emergency exit door and checked the stairs. He readily stepped in and skipped up two or three stairs at once. When he got to the next floor, he circled around the area once and checked that there was nothing special before heading back to the exit. He had done the same with multiple floors when he heard a familiar voice.

"Josh!" the person called. Josh instinctively looked up. Isaac was walking down the stairs toward him. "Have you finished looking around?

There wasn’t much on my side.”

“Huh? Oh yes, roughly done.” Josh was just about to open the door to the next floor. Since he had run into Isaac, this was the final floor. Isaac quickly caught on and began to walk alongside Josh.

“I heard that they’re checking anyone who enters the building quite thoroughly. Anyone from outside who is visiting the place today has already had their identity screened in advance. Everyone else is a staff member. We don't need to check everybody individually, do we?” asked Isaac.

“I guess not then,” Josh replied absentmindedly as he rolled the candy inside his mouth. He could faintly smell Isaac’s alpha pheromones. It wasn’t just thanks to the candy in his mouth that he was able to be so nonchalant about Isaac’s pheromones; ever since that day, that man’s pheromones were the only scent that could allure him. The only problem was that the scent was sweet to the point of torture, even though Josh was absolutely sick of that man.

“...?” Josh felt a strange sensation and looked up. Isaac was gazing down at him. Josh only realized that Isaac’s finger had brushed against his hair afterward.

“What is it?” Josh asked, puzzled by his action.

Isaac blinked his eyes in bewilderment and hurriedly replied, “There was something on your hair.”

“Was there?” Not thinking much of it, Josh roughly brushed his palms against his head.

Isaac stared at him for a little while before opening his mouth again. “How’s Pitt doing?”

“Hm? Pretty good.” Josh’s happiest hour of the day was calling Pitt and hearing his voice before bed. Recalling the child’s voice that he had heard even the night before automatically loosened the corners of his mouth.

Following behind Josh, Isaac asked, “Don’t you miss him?”

“Of course I miss him, but I’ve got no choice,” answered Josh as he opened the emergency exit to look around once before closing it again.

As they walked along, Isaac asked again, “When this gig is over… will you be going to Canada or Alaska?”

“Who knows… Why do you ask?” Josh finally looked up at Isaac.

Isaac averted his gaze and mumbled, “Well… When will Pitt’s mom be back? Will your whole family be moving?”

In that short moment, Josh had to work his brain hard. Should he lie? How should he lie? Should he make an excuse? Should he pretend not to understand?

Just a few seconds had passed when he apathetically replied, “That’s something to think about when the time comes. It’s still a faraway story.”

“Yeah…” Isaac trailed off unsurely.

Was he worried that the team might be disbanded? Josh lightly pat him on the back and continued, “It was just a hopeful comment kind of thing. Who knows what the future holds? No need to worry about it in advance.”

When they had opened the door of the opposite emergency stairs, a sudden sound rang from Josh’s earpiece. It was Mark.

“Where are you? Almost done yet?” Mark asked.

Josh readjusted the earpiece that was fixed around his earflap and replied, “Almost done looking around. Should I head over to the studio when I’m done?”

“How about Isaac?”

This time, Isaac was the one who replied to Mark. “I’m with Josh.”

“...Together? Well, whatever. Nothing special?”

“No, nothing special.” Josh turned to Isaac, who also gave the same answer.

After confirming their replies, Mark announced, “Change of plans. Both of you come down to the monitoring room.”

He was referring to the security office where the monitors for the security cameras both inside and outside the building were located. Josh and Isaac exchanged looks of confusion.

“It’s a bit…” Isaac murmured to himself as he walked after Josh, who had set off first.

Josh nodded. “I don’t have a good feeling about this.”

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When they opened the door and walked in, they quickly saw Mark staring at the monitor with a grave expression. Josh marched across the monitoring room and followed Mark’s gaze onto the monitor.

“What’s going on?” Josh asked.

Mark didn’t give an answer right away. Instead, he asked back, “Nothing much happened, right? How’s the exit route? Everything looking

good?”

“Yes. No suspicious objects or people… yeah.” Josh saw Mark nodding and was about to explain the route that he had checked. Mark, however, stopped Josh by holding up his hand.

He rubbed his creased brow and explained, “They’re almost done with C, but… the fans are crowding outside like crazy. I heard that some people got injured from being pushed around, and someone got taken by an ambulance a while ago. We need some kind of measure.”

“Is it bad enough that we won’t be able to leave?” Isaac asked nervously.

Without a word, Mark shifted his gaze. Out of the many monitors, when they saw the screen that showed the outside of the building, everyone forgot how to speak for a moment. There was a massive crowd gathered outside.

Josh turned pale as he muttered, “Times Square on New Year’s couldn’t even compare to this.”

Mark groaned. “This is worse than it was a few years back. There are even more crazy fans now.”

Everyone sighed. Isaac quickly asked, “Do the security staff members here have a protocol or some other countermeasure? At this rate, things might become very serious if more people get hurt.”

Mark nodded and replied in a serious tone, “We notified the police, and they said that they will send their own security team. It seems like we only need to worry about two other entrances.”

“The west emergency exit might get swarmed over,” a staff member interjected hurriedly. Josh, Mark, and Isaac all shifted their gazes onto the screen at once.

“The hell is that, a wall of zombies?” blurted out another staff member, looking overwhelmed. It was just as he had said. The screen reminded them of a certain movie that had a scene with countless zombies climbing a wall all over the screen.

“Shouldn’t we be calling SWAT instead of the police?” murmured Isaac, watching the people who were screaming to get into the building first. He was half-joking, but he was also being half-serious.

All the while, the security guards had blocked them off once again. Behind them, they were frantically pulling down the thick barricade shutter that was used during fires. However, the crowd was already surrounding the building in thick layers.

“In any case, we better talk about what we should do. It’s not like we can shoot all of those people,” Mark said worriedly. He turned to Josh and instructed, “Go to the back. I’m going to stay here and watch the situation unfold a little more.”

“Yessir,” Josh replied before quickly moving along. He could almost faintly hear the people’s cheers—which were more like howls at this point—from outside the building.

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Chapter 8

The meeting room was silent. Nobody dared to open their mouths. Chase, who had been brought to the meeting room after everything was done on his end, hadn't said a single word while he was being updated on the current situation. All he did was stay in his seat with a straight face.

"So," Chase finally opened his mouth after the manager had finished telling him everything and there had been a long and heavy silence. "We can't go back?"

"No," the manager began cautiously as if to read the atmosphere. "The head of the security team is currently searching for a way. It seems like it would be difficult to get in the car and go back like the way we came. The building is completely surrounded…"

The manager's voice gradually died down. Chase didn't say anything. His face remained as expressionless as a doll.

Everyone was anxiously glancing at each other when Chase suddenly moved. All he did was stretch his hand out to the manager, but everyone who had been watching him at that moment all held their breaths together. Was he going to hit the manager? With the same exact thought in mind, everyone tensed up. Just then, the manager hurriedly pulled out a black metal case from their pocket.

Cigarettes.

Sighs of relief arose from all over the room as the tension eased. Chase silently lodged the cigarette between his lips and lit it ablaze. As he exhaled the smoke deeply, everyone nervously waited for Mark to arrive.

"Mr. Miller, would you like anything to drink?" asked the secretary, who had just been glancing at him until then.

However, what returned was Chase's cynical sneer. "What kind of trash are you planning to make me drink?"

"...I'm sorry." The secretary quickly stepped back. Silence settled into the room once again.

Josh truly felt as if he were suffocating. To be with Chase Miller in a small, enclosed space like this—the scent of the pheromones that constantly poured out of him was driving Josh insane, and the tension added on top of it was killing him.

Should I just say that I need to use the bathroom? contemplated Josh, cautiously glancing toward Chase. Without warning, their eyes met. Josh froze in shock.

He quickly realized that Chase could have been staring at him all this time. Of course, it must be a delusion. Strangely enough, however, he didn't look away.

Josh didn't know what to do about the persistent gaze that continued to stay fixed on him. Chase's obstinate stare almost felt as if he were waiting for their eyes to meet.

Josh gulped. The sound of his saliva rolling down his throat felt abnormally loud. Chase was still staring at him and his Adam's apple that bobbed wildly up and down. At that moment, Josh felt the nerves throughout his entire body sharpen, pricking on his skin, wanting to stab through.

Just then, a knock sounded on the door, and Mark walked in. Josh finally felt the tension in his nerves relax. He sighed in relief, but Mark's expression didn't seem all too good.

"The barricade has fallen," announced Mark.

Henry let out a painful groan. Chase finally took his eyes off Josh, but he still remained unresponsive.

Mark continued, "It seems impossible to move right now. The police are in the process of dismissing the crowd, so if we wait a little bit—"

"How long?" Chase's indifferent voice cut off Mark's sentence. Mark hesitated. Chase waited for a few seconds before asking again, "How long do I have to wait?"

"I'm not sure," Mark blinked, looking disconcerted. "At least three to four hours—"

"Hahh," Chase let out a short sigh. At the same time, everyone shut their mouths. He creased his brow without a word. The faint scent of his pheromones slowly became stronger. He was irritated. It was getting very difficult to bear for Josh.

"Um…" Seth quickly began, a beat earlier than Josh. Josh had missed the timing to speak.

"Do you have an idea?" Isaac urged on.

"The route that we planned out has no problem, right? We just need a way to get there somehow."

“Getting there is the problem, dumba*s,” spat Henry, as if he had been waiting for it. Isaac glared at him in annoyance—as rare as it was for him to get annoyed—but soon turned away his gaze.

It happened all the time, so Josh casually pat Isaac on the back and intervened, “So… Mark?”

Once everyone had settled down again, Mark continued, “The police are trying to dismiss the crowd, but it’s not easy. They think it would be the fastest for us to get out of here first.”

“But is there a way for us to get out?” asked Seth.

Mark glanced toward the door, and the team members followed him outside. Josh could finally breathe freely. Only after they huddled into a circle in the hallway did Mark gravely continue, “How about one of us act as bait?”

“Ugh, no—” Henry was about to shoot down the idea right away, but when everybody glared at him at once, he immediately shut his mouth.

Mark explained, “It may be a cliché, but it’s a cliché because it works. Here, we add another trap. The first wave will be bait, and then we’ll send out the second wave right away.”

“But the real thing will be—”

“The third wave, yes,” Mark nodded. “The first and second waves will drive away in different directions. Then, the crowd of fans will also split into two groups. They’d expect one of the two to be bait, but they wouldn’t guess that both of them are bait. Once things calm down a little, we take C and get out of here. Got it?”

There was no better way. Isaac, who was standing by the door, quietly stepped aside. Mark cleared his throat and knocked on the door. When he opened the door to the waiting room, a sweet scent burst out from within.

“Mr. Miller.” Mark forced a smile and stepped inside first. Josh was the last to enter—of course, with another candy in his mouth.

I’m gonna get diabetes at this rate, Josh gloomily thought to himself, feeling his mouth growing dry. When he closed the door behind him and turned around, he saw Chase sitting alone among the well-built men who were standing around him. He had a cigarette in one hand and a paper cup filled with black coffee in the other, his face still as expressionless as a bisque doll.

Mark explained the plan and finished off, “...And that’s what we came up with. If you have any other ideas, do let us know.”

Throughout Mark’s explanation, Chase was resting his chin on his hand without a word. Josh wondered if he was even listening properly. Chase scanned the bodyguards one by one with squinted eyes.

Finally, punctuating every word, Chase asked, “Who do you plan to use as my proxy?”

Mark glanced at Isaac. “Well, Isaac’s stature is the closest to yours, Mr. Miller. And for the second wave, we’ll have Seth—”

Chase followed Mark’s gaze and stared at Isaac.

“No,” he spat. Everyone looked at him, stunned. With a straight face, Chase continued, “He’s ugly.”

A cold silence fell over the meeting room. Isaac was certainly fairly ordinary-looking for an alpha, but he wasn’t ugly. If anything, about three out of 10 people had about the same level of attractiveness as he did.

Chase arrogantly pointed at Josh and Isaac, one after the other. “Your face, your body. Make it work.”

An exasperated sigh escaped Isaac’s mouth. In his stead, Mark replied, “I’m sorry, but we cannot separate their heads from their bodies. You’ll have to choose one.”

Chase pointed at Josh and offered another simple solution. “Then you, stretch your height right now.”

“That… also cannot be done, unfortunately.”

“You incompetent motherfuckers, what can you do?” Chase threw his coffee at the wall in response to Mark’s firm refusal. The black coffee that was in the paper cup splattered gruesomely over the wall, oxidizing into a brownish-black stain. Even then, Chase didn’t seem any less angry. He whipped his head toward Josh and gritted his teeth. “Why do you have to be so short?”

Everyone’s eyes instantly shifted to Josh. Chase had said the same thing when they had first met—although Josh didn’t expect him to remember.

Before Josh could say anything, Chase snapped, “How pathetic. Why the hell is that bastard even here? Tell me, what can you do? What use do you have? If someone were to shoot me in the head, how do you plan to stop them being that short?”

Including Chase, everyone was well over six feet. Aside from the fact that Josh, who was just barely six feet, naturally seemed shorter in comparison to everyone else, Josh could never understand why Chase

expected him to sacrifice his own damn head to protect Chase's oh-so-glorious head—both back then and right now.

"Why not wear a helmet?" grumbled Josh.

"Josh!" Mark cried, frantically stopping Josh from saying his daring final words before getting brutally murdered. He hurriedly continued, "There is no other way right now. If you have any alternatives, please let us know."

That was Mark's way of cushioning "If you think you're so great, then you come up with a good idea." Chase was silent for a moment. Mark planned to wait just three minutes before sticking it in his face if Chase couldn't come up with anything.

As Mark glanced at the clock, Chase's lips slowly fell apart. "The helicopter."

Mark jolted, and Josh blinked his eyes.

While everyone remained frozen, Chase continued. "There's a helicopter stationed here, isn't there?" he asked, shifting his gaze onto his secretary.

She belatedly realized what he had meant and nodded. "I'll see to it immediately."

"Oh, I'll come with you—" Josh tried to seize the chance to escape the room after her. However, his little trick was quickly foiled.

"Stay right there." Chase's cold voice echoed from across the room. Josh instinctively halted on the spot. He hesitated a little before turning around to find Chase sitting at the end of the path formed by his teammates who had each stepped to either side, just like the Crossing of the Red Sea.

His piercing gaze seemed to be seeing right through Josh. He couldn't run away like this. Josh had no choice but to give up.

"...Yes," Josh replied wearily. He closed the door once again and stood as far away from Chase as possible. Seth stared at Josh with pity in his eyes.

"Among you…" Chase opened his mouth. Everyone's eyes rested on him once again. Josh was flabbergasted by the fact that a single word—no, a single gesture—from Chase was enough to make everyone's stomach tighten up. However, unfortunately, he was no different. He wasn't in a position to pity anyone.

"Who knows how to fly a helicopter? Can all of you do it?" interrogated Chase.

"No," Mark said.

Oh, Mark, anything but that, Josh pleaded in his head.

However, Josh's desperate prayer didn't reach Mark. Mark went on, "Josh and Isaac can, but Josh is probably better at it. Right, Josh? You used to fly helicopters when you were in the army."

Using Mark's words as the cue, Seth quickly jumped back. Josh's efforts were for naught, and he became completely exposed to Chase's gaze.

This is why I wanted to get out of here first… Josh grumbled internally, feeling his nightmare come true right before his eyes. With no other choice, Josh raised his hand. "...I'll do it."

"Great." Just like that, Chase had ended the conversation. Not long after, the secretary returned.

"Mr. Miller, there is only one helicopter on standby right now." With a pale face, she continued quickly, "The other helicopter is under maintenance, so it will take time. But the pilot is currently not on site. They said that it would take him at least two hours to get here… and it doesn't look easy for him to try to get through the crowd to get into the building."

"It's fine." Chase stood up right away and looked straight down at Josh. "Prepare to leave immediately."

"Just a second. I need to check the helicopter before we leave," Josh interjected hurriedly. Even if the helicopter had already gone through maintenance, it was a regular procedure for the pilot to examine it once more before takeoff.

Mark nodded, agreeing with Josh. "It won't take long. Right, Josh?"

Josh quickly took the opportunity. "I'll be as quick as possible. If you could just wait here for a moment—"

However, all he got in response was a scoff. "What did you just say?"

The secretary quickly caught on and interrupted, "We can all go together." She turned her body first and whispered softly to Josh, "Did you forget about the warning on the contract? Don't ever tell Mr. Miller to wait again."

"You mean those warnings that forbid us from everything but breathing?" Josh exploded and whispered back sarcastically.

The secretary nodded with a straight face. "Exactly."

Josh said nothing more and quickly followed after her.

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“...!”

As soon as they opened the rooftop door where the helicopter was on standby, a loud cheer erupted. Josh endured the deafening noise and walked —basically ran—toward the stationed helicopter. Breathing in some fresh air from outside enlivened him a little bit. He sat down on the pilot’s seat right away and began to examine the instruments.

Meanwhile, the other members excluding Seth and Isaac had urgently left to check on the situation. Chase was leaning against the wall, smoking his cigarette. He wasn’t persistently staring at Josh like before, but his presence was still as intense as ever. Josh could feel the silent pressure just from Chase being there—that he would not let him live it out if Josh didn’t finish quickly. Thanks to this, Josh moved his hands twice as quickly as usual.

In any case, however, it was impossible to drag out the time too long. The cheers were getting louder by the second.

“They broke through!” With a desperate cry, Mark dashed out of the door. As soon as the door opened, the cheers became multiple times closer. Chills ran down everyone’s spines. Chase, who had been very still as he leaned against the wall, took his back off the wall. At the same time, the throat-ripping screeches stabbed at their eardrums.

“Chase—!” Josh saw the remaining four, including Mark, hurriedly closing the door and blocking it with their bodies. Josh frantically prepared for takeoff. If Chase were to be caught now, his flesh would be separated from his bones.

Chase, who was walking toward the helicopter, turned around. He saw his entourage barricading the rooftop door with all their might.

“Get in, hurry!” Josh shouted desperately. Chase was the first to get in, and his secretary and the other staff members followed. Josh lifted the helicopter off the ground by a little, so that they could leave as soon as his teammates got in.

Mark, who had been watching everything unfold, lifted off his hands from the door and yelled, “Everybody run!”

At the same time, everyone turned around and began to sprint. Mark quickly jumped in, followed by Isaac, then Seth.

Thud! Thud! A series of heavy noises echoed, and the rooftop door that had just been holding on swung wide open. Through the open door behind them, a tsunami of people readily burst out with a cheer.

It was the scariest sight they had ever seen in their lives.

“Fuck, hey!” Henry finally managed to reach the ground directly beneath the helicopter and frantically jumped up. All they had to do now was leave. Using his impressive jumping power, Henry grabbed onto the floor of the helicopter that was just taking off. However, this made the helicopter lose its balance and wobble.

Josh hurriedly grabbed onto the control lever as Mark and Isaac quickly pulled Henry up. Just as Josh managed to regain balance and was about to rise farther up, the body of the helicopter tilted once again. One of the fans was trying to get onto the helicopter like Henry had.

“Ack!”

“Ngah!”

Yelps burst out from all over the helicopter. Josh tried to fly the helicopter up regardless, but the weight had increased exponentially in a matter of seconds. A few more people had grabbed on.

Josh cried sharply, “What are you doing? Push them off!”

Henry, who had got in last, was the closest to the entrance. He got up right away and blocked the man from climbing into the helicopter. Grabbing onto the open door, he was just about to push the man off.

Suddenly, Chase bent his knee and kicked his long leg forward.

“Argh!” Kicked mercilessly at the back of his knee, Henry’s leg gave in and he fell forward. With this, his body fell onto the bodies of the people who were hanging from the helicopter, and the force that had been weighing the helicopter down disappeared at once. The helicopter, now suddenly lighter, sprang upward from the resulting force.

“Henry!”

“Holy shit!”

“Mr. Miller, what have you done?!”

Everyone screamed in shock as they stared at Chase, visibly expressing disbelief.

Josh opened his eyes wide in surprise and quickly moved his gaze downward. However, Henry was already buried in the gathering crowd and nowhere to be seen.

“What are you doing? Go,” spat Chase. Josh turned toward him in bewilderment. However, Chase remained shameless. “Close the door and fly.”

There was no choice. Chase, however, didn’t even give the slightest room for hesitation.

“All right,” said Chase, his cigarette still wedged between his lips. “I’ll get off.”

“What?” Everyone, not to mention the secretary, turned toward him in shock.

But Chase wasn’t joking at all. “Wait for him and get him onto the helicopter. I’ll get off.”

“What kind of nonsense—” Josh shouted before he could catch himself. Chase huffed out a short bout of smoke and tossed his cigarette out the open helicopter door. The crowd clamored to catch the flying cigarette butt.

“Goodbye,” said Chase.

“Mr. Miller!” Everyone was stunned as they watched him get into position to jump off the helicopter. The fans screeched at the top of their voices, and everyone in the helicopter rushed to stop him.

“Go, Josh! Now!” Mark finally shouted, and Josh hastily drove the helicopter onto course. Behind him, the team was busy shutting the door and calming down Chase. When the commotion had somewhat settled down, everyone was a wreck.

“*Hahh*…” It was a rare occurrence for Seth to sigh audibly. Everyone else felt the same, but nobody could bring themselves to show it.

‘Is there anyone in this world who has a sh*ttier personality than him?’ Josh wondered profoundly, watching the setting sun in the far distance as he sat in the pilot’s seat.

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“I quit.”

It was the first thing that Henry said after finally coming back a few hours later, deep into the night, having driven back in the car that had been left behind. Everyone had somewhat expected it, so nobody was particularly surprised.

The secretary, who had been waiting past her work hours, offered Henry a new term right away as if she had been expecting his announcement. “I’m so sorry about what happened today, Henry. I… can’t guarantee that something like this won’t happen again, but we will most certainly

compensate you for all your hard work. We can sign an additional contract —”

“I quit,” Henry spat, gritting his teeth. “Do I look like a beggar to you? You think money makes everything okay? Thinking about all the shit I went through today because of that motherfucker, even the entire United States wouldn’t be enough. And you say what, compensation? How much fucking compensation, huh? All you bitches must be insane—”

“Calm down, Henry,” Isaac stepped up and stopped Henry, whose emotions got out of hand as he began to uncontrollably spew out curses. In any case, the secretary was innocent; she was only here in place of Chase.

Even so, Henry’s anger was relatable to all. His well-kept face was scratched all over, bruises big and small were tinting his entire body red, and his hair was unkempt, looking like it had been pulled in all directions. Not only his tie but his blazer was also nowhere to be seen, and his shirt had been shredded into rags as it hung shabbily over his body. Even his oxfords —thank God they hadn’t been lost—were trampled on and creased; they would likely end up miserably abandoned sometime soon.

He was truly a mess.

Even a homeless man on a beach after a hurricane would look less pathetic than him. Everyone who laid eyes on Henry couldn’t hide their sympathy. Stumped, the secretary turned toward Mark, but it wasn’t like Mark could do anything, either.

Of all people that could have gotten left behind, it was Henry.

He had the worst temper out of all the team members, so none of the team members dared cross him. Constantly swearing aside, he would rush in and bite like a dog whenever poked even just a little. During the few years in which they worked together, everybody avoided going against his mood as much as possible. Chase had truly just stepped on a landmine.

“Please calculate my pay by the end of today. I’ll be going back to Boston immediately tomorrow. If you don’t make my returning plane ticket first class, I’ll sue y’all.” Henry gritted his teeth thunderously, turned around, and stormed right out of the living room. The secretary awkwardly glanced at everyone one by one.

“This isn’t going to work.” Isaac was the first to speak up. “We all know that Mr. Miller doesn’t think much of us, but we’re doing our best. And yet, he ditched Henry because he couldn’t wait just a few seconds. It wasn’t like he didn’t know what was going to happen. Moreover, we would have been

able to bring Henry onboard at the end, and Mr. Miller just went through the trouble of kicking him down. It's no surprise that Henry is so angry."

Isaac's complaint was calm, but completely reasonable. The secretary blushed and averted her gaze. "I understand, of course, but it couldn't be helped at the time. You know it, too. If we hadn't left right away, Mr. Miller would actually have jumped off the helicopter."

Since it was their job to protect Chase, that was the one thing that had to be prevented. Ultimately, Chase had been threatening them. The fact that it worked and that they had to abandon Henry in the end was what made them feel most bitter.

"To be honest, I feel like I should have ignored him and not cared whether or not he got caught by the fans and became ground into a powder," agreed Seth, who had been silent until now.

To be fair, Henry had just been unlucky. Any of the team members could have ended up like Henry, and the possibility was real in future instances as well. All it boiled down to was who would be drawing the unlucky raffle next.

Laura, the secretary, just stood there awkwardly, not knowing what to do. She had to stop the security team that she had such a hard time finding from quitting. However, Laura also knew that their anger wouldn't subside so easily. She was panicking and trying her best to console the team members, to the point where they almost felt sorry for her.

"I don't think this is something that you're able to solve on your end, Laura," Josh, who had just been watching, began softly. The secretary looked at him in surprise. Hardening his resolve, Josh continued, "Whatever promises you make, he could just ignore them and call it a day. We should talk to Chase Miller directly to reach a conclusion."

"But…" Laura muttered, looking visibly flustered.

Isaac chimed in, "Josh is right. This incident can't just be overlooked with your promise or monetary compensation. We very well knew that Mr. Miller was self-centered, but there is still a line that shouldn't be crossed."

"What are you trying to say, then? Do you plan to go and fight it out with Mr. Miller right now?" she spat irritably. Laura had also been pestered all day, and she must have been considerably stressed by this situation.

Josh asked indifferently, "Why not?"

Laura blinked in shock, and Mark also glanced at Josh in surprise. Laura hesitated a little before giving up and taking her leave. Only then did Mark

ask Josh, “You’re going to fight it out with C? Actually?”

“Are we not?”

“I suppose we should, yes. But…” Mark seemed incredibly unwilling.

Still with a straight face, Josh said, “Don’t worry. I’ll talk to him.”

“You will?”

“Are you being serious?”

Isaac and Seth asked in astonishment. Mark, who had been thinking that it was his job to do so, blinked slowly at Josh’s unexpected comment. “Why you?”

Josh replied nonchalantly, “I’m the one who flew the helicopter and left Henry behind.”

“You had no choice.”

“I still feel bad about it. Moreover, I really hate having to feel so disgusted because of a choice I made against my own will.”

Everyone fell silent at Josh’s rare brusque comment. Laura, who returned a moment later, uneasily urged that only one of them should go talk to Chase. Mark looked relieved, guilty, and irritated all at once. With a complicated mixture of feelings, Mark sent Josh.

“We’ll be watching through the camera, just in case,” said Isaac behind Josh, perhaps recalling the time when Chase had almost drowned Josh. Josh laughed a little and left the living room, heading toward Chase’s room.

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His hair was still wet as if he had just finished showering. The sweet scent that always faintly lingered around him mixed with the scent of laundry detergent, making Josh feel strangely lightheaded. Josh intentionally crunched down on the candy in his mouth, crushing it into pieces, so that he wouldn’t become intoxicated by Chase’s scent.

“What is it that you want to talk about?” Chase asked annoyedly. His cheeks were flushed a faint red from the shower.

My fighting power would have been at least 100,000 points greater if only I hadn’t seen his fucking face, thought Josh.

Swallowing his curses that were automatically welling up within him, Josh fixed his gaze downward, avoiding looking at Chase’s face as calmly as possible. This time, Chase’s slender neck and sculpted collarbones caught Josh’s eyes through Chase’s shirt that was once or twice unbuttoned.

Josh's eyes subconsciously trailed downward to Chase's lean muscles and heat-flushed nipples that peeked through the fabric. It felt even more explicit than a fully naked body.

In the end, Josh had no choice but to shift his gaze back onto Chase's face. He wished he were blind at this very moment.

"I would like an apology for what happened today, and a planned measure for what will happen in the future as well," Josh began. All Chase did in reaction was briefly raise his eyebrows.

Josh continued, "You know, about abandoning one of our team members. He sustained a lot of injuries from it. There is no guarantee that something like this won't happen again in the future. We must also secure our personal safety in case of another similar instance—"

"Why is that a problem?" Chase seemed like he truly didn't understand as he stared at Josh. It was a very obvious reaction from someone who had been living a life where it was very obvious for him to sacrifice someone else for his own sake.

Trying his best to remain patient, Josh replied, "If you continue to use us like this, we cannot continue taking on this job anymore."

"But that's your job, isn't it?"

"Our job is to protect you, not to get whipped around or get beaten up on your whims," spat Josh. His words automatically became harsher.

Chase nonchalantly swept his hair back and gazed down at Josh. "It's a part of your contract to give up your life for me, no?"

"I don't believe your life was in danger today, Mr. Miller."

"Must be a difference in perspectives, then. I was frightened, you see."

Don't make me laugh, you motherfucker!' thought Josh. Unable to hold back his overflowing emotions, Josh punched the wall hard. Slam! A dull noise rang chillingly across the room. Josh felt as if he could hear a distant echo of the slamming as he glared at Chase. However, that was the extent of what he could do. Josh held back his anger and tried to continue the conversation as calmly as he could. After all, he had once almost been killed.

As Josh tried to suppress his anger, Chase let out an unexpected scoff. Josh, who was about to continue speaking, paused.

"Why are you punching the wall? Aren't I the one you'd like to punch?"

"It's not like I can punch my client," Josh muttered through clenched teeth.

Chase made an unbelievably innocent face. “What does that matter? Just do it if you want to.”

Josh’s ears perked up. “Oh, can I punch you? Really?”

Chase hesitated. Watching his face that had now been wiped of any smiles, Josh pressed on earnestly, “If you had told me that from the beginning, I wouldn’t have bothered using my words. How hard and how many times can I punch you? Not below the waist, right? Oh, maybe I should also avoid the face. You’re an actor, after all.”

Chase looked down at Josh, who seemed incredibly enthusiastic, like he was being outrageous, and continued to remain silent.

Only after a long pause did Chase open his mouth and ask, “...You really mean to punch me?”

Josh knitted his brows together. “Is that not allowed after all? I mean, it makes sense. Leaving a wound would also end in trouble.”

When Josh’s face became drenched in disappointment, Chase’s face became distorted. “If you’ve wanted to hit me for so long, why didn’t you do so until now?”

Josh gave an obvious answer. “You’re our client. It would be bad if we got sued. Not everyone has a rotten amount of money like you do, Mr. Miller.”

Chase fell silent for a moment at Josh’s bland reaction.

“So what will you do if given the chance?” Chase asked quietly.

Josh beamed. Just imagining being able to brush aside all of his grudges with his fists made it difficult for him to close his gaping mouth. “I’ll hit you as much as I am able to, of course. I’d never get another chance like this.”

“Hah!” Chase exclaimed in disbelief before mocking, “Why don’t you try it now, then? If you can, that is.”

Josh gasped. However, he quickly resumed his guard and asked, “Really? You’re not going to go back on your words later and file a damage claim against me, right? Are you going to say that I’m not allowed to hit this spot and that spot and basically your entire body—”

Josh’s chain of doubtful questions made Chase snap irritably, “I told you, do whatever you want. You said it too, didn’t you? I have a rotten lot of money. You think I’d be interested in your pennies?”

“You’re not kidding, are you?”

When Josh reconfirmed, Chase stuck his face right in front of Josh. “Here, do it. Face or wherever, hit me all you want. Why aren’t you doing it? Too scared to do it? F*ckers like you are always all bark and no bite. You can’t even bring yourself to touch my hair, and all you do is yap and yap. Look, even now—you can’t even flinch. I knew it. It’s always like that. Dumb motherfuckers bluffing like—”

At that moment, Josh pounded his fist into Chase’s abdomen.

“...!”

Chase staggered and stepped back, startled by the sudden ambush. Josh went for his next punch right away, but Chase narrowly dodged it this time. Chase grabbed onto Josh’s arm that had whisked through the air and pulled it toward himself.

“I never said that I’d just stand here and take the hit,” scorned Chase.

Right away, Chase dug his fist into Josh’s waist. Josh gasped and jumped back. As Josh wobbled, Chase threw another punch, and Josh dodged it by quickly rolling to the side. At the same time, Josh stretched out his leg and kicked Chase’s stomach. This time, Chase was the one who stumbled. Josh didn’t let the opportunity pass; he dashed right at Chase once again.

Thwack!

An unfamiliar sound slapped Josh’s eardrums. Josh opened his eyes wide. He had belatedly realized that he had smacked Chase in the face, but it was too late.

Josh wasn’t the only one who was surprised. Josh didn’t know that a person’s eyes could be opened so wide until he saw Chase. Chase opened his mouth like he couldn’t believe what was going on at all, closed it, opened it again, and closed it once more.

In an attempt to fix the situation, Josh hurriedly said, “...You said I could hit you anywhere, right?”

“You…!”

Chase’s eyes became overcome with insanity. After that, it was chaos. Josh punched Chase’s side, Chase dealt a blow to Josh’s abdomen, Josh kicked Chase on the shin, and Chase pummeled Josh on the chin. A plate from the Ming Dynasty that was decorating the room shattered mercilessly, and just like that, one of humanity’s legacies was gone. Warhol’s work that had been hanging on the wall was ripped. Chase’s very first Best Actor in a Leading Role trophy was now smashed into pieces.

When Josh’s teammates finally rushed into the room and separated the two, there was no object in the room that remained unscathed.

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Chapter 9

“How could you just beat up your client like that?” Mark criticized Josh in frustration. Josh remained silent, staring at Seth as he wrapped a bandage around him.

Isaac retorted, “It’s not like C just took the hits. Josh got hit this much, too. They exchanged blows.”

It was true. Josh was the one who had lunged first, but Chase didn’t just stand around and let himself get beaten up. As if to prove this, Josh spat out a mouthful of bloody saliva that had pooled up.

“Beating up a person like this…” murmured Isaac with a scowl.

“Hey, hey. Didn’t you see Josh flattening C like a pancake?” Mark pointed out.

Seth, who had been silent until then, muttered, “It was truly satisfying.”

Mark fell quiet for a moment. Even he couldn’t deny that feeling. Isaac chipped in, “At least Josh didn’t go for a roundhouse kick. He went easy. Imagine how C would have ended up by now if Josh had actually kicked him with full intention.”

Josh suddenly recalled the words of the master who had taught him Taekwondo. “Having long legs is good, but it’s way too scary,” he had said.

Henry, who had heard the news late, ditched packing his things and rushed in. He yapped, “You should have punched his Adam’s apple!”

“And actually kill him?” Josh rolled his eyes. Henry shut his mouth, which was a rare occurrence. Thanks to this, everyone was able to realize that this was, in fact, his deepest desire.

“I’m gonna go watch the security camera clip. Everything’s been recorded, right? What’s the timestamp?” prodded Henry, wanting to jump straight into the climax. This was the first time anyone had seen Henry so enthusiastic since last summer, when he had blown away all his money in gambling only to find out that the other gamblers had cheated. He combed through all of Las Vegas for days and didn’t stop until he found them and beat them up into a pulp.

Josh stopped Henry, who had changed the subject and turned around. Josh scrambled for a bag of popcorn and handed it to Henry. “Three minutes in the microwave.”

“Holy moly! Thanks, bro.” Henry tightly grabbed onto Josh’s hand, unusually touched. Feeling immensely pressured by the shimmer of trust and anticipation that sparkled in Henry’s eyes like stars, Josh forced a smile. Henry excitedly murmured, “I’ll have some coke, too,” and left the room.

Once Henry was gone, Isaac muttered, “Now he won’t say that he’ll quit for a while, right?”

“This should keep him for a bit,” Mark sighed as if the thought was giving him a headache. “Now, let’s all call it here. I’ll have a calm talk with C or Laura tomorrow. They should have realized that things are serious by now… you know, about the contract and the guarding gigs henceforth.” He glanced at Josh and added, “Scurry on.”

Everyone finally scattered about to their own posts. Thankfully, Josh was off duty tonight.

“Ow, ow, ow…!” Josh finally felt the pain catching up to him when he laid down on his bed after a quick shower. Chase wasn’t an easy opponent. With both his physical strength and bad temper, he had probably swung his fists around with full intent. Thankfully for Josh, Chase had never formally learned any martial arts or any other ways of fighting.

Feeling a dull pain and exhaustion belatedly washing over his body, Josh let out a low groan. It would likely start hurting more tomorrow.

I’ll think about that tomorrow, thought Josh as he closed his eyes. In any case, he found it enough that his heart was peaceful and refreshed.

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“Oh, Josh. Did you sleep well? How’s your body?”

When Josh left his room close to lunchtime, he ran into Isaac, who was just walking by. Josh nodded in response to the greeting, and Isaac quickly came toward him and began to walk alongside him. Josh suddenly became curious and asked, “How was C after that?”

Isaac replied nonchalantly, “Nothing much happened. I think he’s still sleeping.”

“Yeah?” Josh was a little curious as to how badly Chase was injured.

Isaac grumbled abruptly, “Could have beaten him up some more.” It was uncommon for him to speak his mind like this.

Josh, too, responded honestly, “If I did, I would’ve been arrested by now.”

Isaac didn’t say anything more. Suddenly, Josh felt his phone vibrate against his waist area. It was Seth.

“What’s up?” Josh asked as soon as he picked up the phone.

After a short pause, Seth said, “C wants you in his room.”

“Me? Why?” Josh doubted it was because he wanted another chaotic brawl.

Still sounding rather reluctant, Seth replied, “I don’t know. He just wanted you to come, no questions asked.”

As they hung up, Isaac, who had been watching the conversation unfold, asked, “Want me to come with you?”

Josh glanced at Isaac’s worried look and shook his head nonchalantly. “No, it’s all right. Thanks, though.”

After turning Isaac down, he marched forward with long strides. He recalled Henry’s comment about how he should have punched Chase on his Adam’s apple, but quickly erased it from his brain.

Before he knew it, Josh was standing before Chase’s door. However, he couldn’t bring himself to knock on it right away. He took a short, deep breath and brought his hand up to knock.

No answer came from within. Since Chase was the one who had summoned Josh here, Josh assumed that he was waiting for him. Josh hardened his resolve and opened the door.

The room was already neatly cleaned. As obvious as it was, there was no way that the owner of the room was the one who cleaned it. Josh was sure that the cleaning service people had already gone by.

Unfortunately, the many artworks and decorations that had filled the wall and the empty space around the room were gone. The only things left in the room now were Chase, his bed, and a folding chair. Despite that, however, Josh felt that it was more than enough. After all, Chase was the only thing that ever caught his eye.

He was waiting for Josh while sitting on the bed. He was wearing a fairly old-looking pair of jeans—perhaps because they had been worn often—and a simple t-shirt. Although his outfit was extremely ordinary, it seemed to Josh as if Chase had worn the best set of clothes from his closet. Of course, anybody would have thought the same. Chase was perfect.

Except for the black bruise around his eye, that was.

Chase stared at Josh with his eyebrows knitted tightly together. Ever since Josh had opened the door and showed himself, Chase's gaze was fixed on him and remained unmoving. His persistent stare made Josh uncomfortable, but nothing could be done about it.

Josh came to a halt, staying intentionally far away from Chase so that he could run out of the door if the situation called for it. If he were to beat Chase up into a pulp again, he would surely have to sit out in the streets.

Chase remained silent for a long while. All he did was glare at Josh. In the end, Josh, who had been waiting for Chase's tightly pursed lips to open, was the first to speak.

"I heard that you were looking for me," Josh began.

"Why didn't you come?" Chase snapped.

Josh blinked stupidly at Chase's prompt response. "Come where?"

"My room," Chase spat, gritting his teeth. "Shouldn't you have come running straight to me when morning came, you motherfucker? What were you doing and where? Why are you just loitering now?"

Josh's mouth fell open at Chase's unexpected comment. After a moment of speechlessness, he asked, "You were waiting for me? Why?"

"Can't you tell just by looking?" Chase asked between his clenched teeth, but Josh still couldn't tell. When Josh blinked and smiled awkwardly, Chase immediately slammed his fist down on the bed. "For my treatment!"

Only then did Josh see Chase's busted lips and blotchy bruises that had settled everywhere. However, he still hadn't fully understood the situation.

"...You want me to apply some ointment?" Josh asked, half in doubt.

Chase's face turned into a scowl. "Should I call the lawyer instead? Would you like to give me money instead? Or are you willing to sacrifice your body?"

You were the one who said I could hit you, Josh refuted in his head. He was only just able to hold himself back from saying it out loud. This ill-tempered and petty but extremely pretty bastard was dying to put Josh through some trouble.

Josh rolled his hands into fists, looked up at the ceiling, took multiple deep breaths, regained his cold expression, and quickly scanned Chase's body.

Realistically speaking, bruises didn't really need to get treated with anything; they would just disappear over time. The bloody lips and some big and small cuts here and there were easily treatable with some

disinfecting solutions and band-aids. Judging from the way Chase was occasionally pressing down on one side of his chest area, one of his ribs could have gotten fractured or suffered a mild trauma, but it didn't seem like any of his bones were broken. In fact, Josh hadn't even hit him that hard.

However, it wasn't like Josh could just tell him so and leave when Chase had specifically asked him to treat his injuries. If he did that, Josh's life would be ended for good this time.

Josh finally gave in. "I'll bring the first aid kit."

As Josh was about to turn around, he noticed a long gash on the side of Chase's arm. It seemed like he had scratched himself on a corner of some furniture that had broken off. It didn't look like it needed to be stitched up, but some bandages seemed like a good idea. Josh left the room right away to fetch the first aid kit.

Josh opened the bathroom cabinet and wondered if he could put off this situation at all. However, the answer was obvious. There would be nobody else who would be willing to sit with Chase Miller, just the two of them in his room, to treat his wounds in Josh's stead.

Josh sighed as he checked the contents of the first aid kit before returning to Chase's room.

Chase was still sitting on the edge of his bed. Once again, as soon as Josh reappeared, he glared unnervingly at Josh.

Without a word, Josh brought the chair that was placed on one side of the room to where Chase was sitting and began treating his wounds.

The first thing Josh addressed was the deepest wound on the arm. It was deeper than he had thought, but it didn't seem like it would bleed more. He applied the disinfectant, let it dry for a few seconds, and applied some anti-scarring ointment over it. The final step was to wrap the bandage around his arm to stabilize it.

Josh, who had been keeping his lips pursed tightly as he wrapped the bandage, subconsciously looked up. His eyes met with Chase's right away. Josh froze on the spot.

It seemed like Chase had been staring at Josh all this time. Josh had also felt his gaze. He had simply chosen to ignore it. However, a moment of carelessness had created an uncomfortable situation.

Josh should have shifted his gaze away like it was nothing, but he didn't do that. He was taken away by Chase's face.

How could I have dared to leave a bruise on that face? regretted Josh.

Just then, Chase narrowed his eyes. Josh flinched, and Chase scoffed as if he had read Josh's thoughts. Josh lowered his gaze in embarrassment. When Chase saw Josh avert his gaze, his face turned into a scowl.

"What was that? You think you can ignore me?" he snarled.

"No, nothing like that—" retorted Josh.

"Then what, motherfucker?"

If Josh didn't answer, he could be met with a punch this time. Josh quickly replied, "I choose to remain silent. I'd rather not get punched again."

Chase fell quiet for a moment. Just as Josh began to feel anxious, Chase said something unexpected. "I know you space out whenever you see my face."

For a moment, Josh didn't understand what he was trying to say. A few seconds later, he blushed in embarrassment. "Y-You knew?"

"Yes. Did you hope I didn't? Do you think I'm a f*cking idiot like you?"

Although Chase's words were as harsh as ever, his face was filled with pride. His appearance was most certainly worthy of pride.

Josh agreed sourly, "I do like your face."

Chase's facial expression seemed to say, 'Obviously.' Josh, however, maintained his frown as he tilted his head.

"Are you satisfied with that?" asked Josh.

"...What?" This time, it was Chase who didn't immediately understand what Josh had said. He fluttered his long, golden eyelashes up and down before glowering at Josh. "What kind of bullshit are you getting at, you son of a b*tch?"

Fearing a punch would follow those curses, Josh quickly took a step back. "Well, I suppose there must also be perverts out there who like your personality."

"Perverts?"

Josh had poured fuel on fire. He sincerely hoped that the sound that he was hearing right now wasn't Chase gritting his teeth.

Feeling a cold sweat beginning to drench his back, Josh forced a smile. "Strange tastes, perhaps."

Although this wasn't a particularly great way to put it either, Josh had done his best. The scent of the pheromones thickened, but it was because

Chase was angry. Secretly thankful that Chase wasn't intentionally pouring out his pheromones, Josh quickly went back to what he had been doing.

The ominous grinding noise stopped, and Chase opened his mouth. "Both my personality and my face belong to me."

"Oh, yes. They're both parts of you, of course," Josh agreed.

However, Chase seemed dissatisfied by his reaction. When Chase persistently and intensely glared at Josh as if to urge him to speak his mind, Josh gave in and continued honestly.

"But people get older and beauty fades," he said. Chase jolted. Josh added like an afterthought, "I wonder if there would be anyone out there who would like you just for your personality alone."

A frigid silence followed. Chase's lack of comeback made Josh nervous. It was a miracle that he hadn't been punched yet.

Preparing himself for a possible attack from a hand or a foot, Josh applied the rest of the ointment as quickly as he could manage. When he slapped on the final band-aid on the back of Chase's hand and hastily got up, he had no choice but to be met with the gaze that he had been avoiding.

"Now, then—" began Josh, meaning to tell Chase that he should get going.

However, Chase cut him off. "You'll get old, too."

Chase pushed the undeniable truth toward the man with refreshing beauty before his eyes. He must have been thinking about it all along, wondering how he could make Josh the same level of shock and disappointment.

Unfortunately, contrary to his expectations, Josh didn't show much reaction. "Oh, of course. I don't really mind."

Chase wished he could scoff at Josh for pretending not to care, but Josh really wasn't pretending. Truth be told, he did not look disappointed at all. Even more frustrated than before, Chase gritted his teeth. "You think people will continue to like you even without that face of yours because you have such a great personality?"

As Chase glared relentlessly at Josh, Josh let out a small "Hm," and swept up his hair that had fallen down. He smiled bitterly like it couldn't be helped and replied with another question. "Wouldn't that be more likely for me than you, Mr. Miller?"

For the first time, Chase was at a loss for words. He was so enraged, yet no words came to mind. He was frustrated to no end.

Chase wanted to at least curse Josh out, but he knew that it would not rid him of this sense of defeat. He wished he could at least use physical means, but by then Josh had already used his long legs to walk up to the door in just a few strides.

“Now that the treatment is done, I should get going,” Josh said quickly, determined to finally take his leave. However, Chase couldn’t think of what he could have said even after Josh had escaped out the door.

‘He thinks he has a good personality? How so?’ Chase thought angrily, but he already knew the answer that Josh would give: at least better than yours, Mr. Miller.

In the end, Chase just swore loudly and punched the mattress many times over.

‘One day, I will kill that goddamn b*stard,’ Chase told himself. He gritted his teeth, and the region around his eyes felt tight. Chase knitted his brows and glared at the door that Josh had walked out through for a long time.

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The day flew past and the sun was already setting. When Josh headed down to the monitoring room on time, Seth was staring at the monitor with a serious expression.

“What’s wrong?” Josh bent his torso forward to check the monitor and tilted his head in confusion. The security footage of the front gate was showing an unfamiliar car.

“Go help them. Looks like their battery’s out,” said Seth.

“Who are they?” Josh asked curiously, gazing at the handsomely tall man in the monitor who was scratching his face with an open car hood in front of him.

“C’s guest, apparently. Do an identity check while you’re there. If they seem suspicious, just help them fix their car and make them leave.”

“Gotcha.”

Josh left the mansion right away and got into his car. He also didn’t forget to contact Isaac and ask him to patrol around the mansion.

Since Josh always kept various tools in the trunk, he could do simple fixes on the spot. Seth sounded as calm as usual, so it didn’t feel like a huge threat of any kind. Overenthusiastic fans coming near Chase’s house was

something that happened from time to time, and it was nothing wildly out of the ordinary. Josh didn't think too much of it and drove the car across the garden.

A sleek black Jaguar was resting on the other side of the tightly shut iron gate. The man who seemed like the owner of the car was leaning on the door of the car, calling somebody.

Josh parked his car on this side of the gate and got out. The man, who had sensed the presence of another person, turned around. He wore a dark pair of sunglasses, and he felt strangely familiar despite the fact that Josh was sure that he had never met the man before.

He was a tall man with shimmering blond hair. Even though part of his face was covered, one could easily guess how gorgeous he was. They had a scary resemblance. The man slowly took off his sunglasses. As soon as Josh saw the purple eyes that were hidden under the sunglasses, Josh realized who the man was right away.

The man slowly pulled the corners of his lips into a smile.

"Whoa there, I've never seen you around. Are you one of the new security guards?" Even though there was no need for him to introduce himself, he still proceeded to do so. He continued, "Nice to meet you. I'm Grayson, Chase's older brother."

The man reached his hand out through the iron bars of the gate. Josh stared up at him blankly, and they shared an awkward handshake. He felt like a prison inmate meeting a bystander full of pity.

Grayson narrowed his eyes. He whispered in a laid-back sort of way, "Good to have you here."

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Chapter 10

An ominous air filled the mansion. According to Seth, Chase had thrown a chair in a fit as soon as he heard that Grayson was here. Thankfully, he hadn't thrown it at Seth.

As Josh led Grayson to the reception room, Josh's mind was in jumbles—he was half curious as to how Chase would react, and half wanting to run away since, according to Seth, Chase must be in the worst mood possible.

Knock! Knock!

Josh lightly knocked and opened the reception room door. A sweet scent immediately draped over him. His consciousness suffered for a moment, but he thankfully quickly regained his cool. When he audibly crunched down on the candy that he had been melting in his mouth, his head became even clearer.

Chase was waiting for Grayson on the couch. Two or so buttons on his light pink shirt were undone, and he was wearing a pair of white cotton pants. Josh had to hold himself back once again from sighing in awe. Like Grayson was earlier, Chase was wearing sunglasses. The only difference was that Grayson had worn them outside, and Chase was wearing them indoors.

"How long has it been, Chase? My beloved little brother!" exclaimed Grayson.

Grayson opened his arms wide in an attempt to hug Chase. Of course, Chase didn't allow for it.

"Fucking son of a bitch, where do you think you're sticking your head?" barked Chase, lifting his leg off the ground and kicking Grayson in the abdomen. Chase had to have kicked him with all his might, but all Grayson did was stagger a little and take a step back with a playful wince.

Josh opened his eyes wide. He knew from experience that Chase possessed considerable physical strength, yet Grayson had shown very little reaction. Was that man just that tough or had Chase become weaker? However, Grayson's greatness didn't just end there. It initially seemed like he was stumbling back, but he abruptly stretched out his arm and took Chase's sunglasses. There was no time to stop him. Chase also had no choice but to just let it happen, unable to escape Grayson's grasp in time.

Chase’s face became clearly exposed in the bright sun. Soon, Grayson fondled Chase’s cheeks with his hands and squealed in a high-pitched voice like a diva who was singing an aria. “Oh, dear God! All my brother has to him is his face. What in the world happened?”

Josh froze in his spot. Chase, too, stiffened. In that chilling silence, only Grayson cried out like the protagonist of a tragedy. “I had foreseen this day to come. Oh, it’s all over. It’s all over for my little brother.”

“Who the hell are you to decide if it’s over or not, goddammit!” Chase yelled and threw a punch. Unfortunately, however, he missed.

“Oof,” exclaimed Grayson as he just managed to dodge Chase’s attack. He shook his head and said, “I told you over and over to watch your opponent carefully and not just attack blindly. Your face really is all that you have, isn’t it? How do you even memorize your lines with that brain?”

“I’ll kill you!” Chase howled as he got up from the sofa, swinging his fist once again. Josh contemplated for a moment whether to stop Chase, and decided that he would intervene if Chase was overpowered. Josh tensed up his body.

Just then, Grayson, who had once again narrowly dodged Chase’s fist, whispered, “I told you to keep low, Chase. Or do you want to be dragged back home again?”

His voice was as sweet as his pheromones, and his low whisper almost seemed to gently caress the ear.

However, Chase’s face turned paler than ever when he heard those words. Josh had never seen anyone make that kind of face before. Even a corpse would have more color in its face than Chase had right now. He was looking at Grayson as if he had seen a ghost, his face as white as a sheet.

Chase seemed to be having trouble breathing; it was the same feeling Josh had when he first laid eyes on Chase. Grayson smiled brightly at his brother. “Yes, I suppose my little brother isn’t a complete idiot.”

If someone who didn’t know the context had seen them, they would have thought that Grayson couldn’t have been a kinder older brother. Josh, however, had never been more scared of that man in that moment than ever before. Grayson had made Chase freeze like that, yet he continued to smile so nonchalantly.

That man could kill anyone without breaking a sweat. He wouldn’t even need to use his hands. All he needed was a few words.

Chills ran down Josh's spine. It had barely been an hour, but it felt as if he had seen the face under the man's mask. As Josh stood glued to his spot, Grayson suddenly turned toward him. When their eyes met, Josh flinched. Grayson put on the smile that he had shown Josh earlier.

"Would you mind giving us some space? Family talk, you know." Grayson glanced at Chase and added, "Chase should also be ready to listen now."

Grayson lightly placed his hand on Chase's shoulder, and something unbelievable happened. Chase quietly sat back down on the sofa.

Josh blinked his eyes in shock. Chase was being so obedient—just like a pet dog who had gone through strict training. It was the most unfitting description of the Chase Miller that Josh had seen so far.

Silence settled once more. Grayson sat across from Chase and turned to Josh, as if to ask what he was waiting for.

Josh stood still for a moment and gazed down at Chase. For some reason, he felt like he shouldn't leave him alone here. Was it really okay for him to leave the room?

As he glanced at Chase's face, Josh wasn't sure why he thought of Pitt.

Once, Josh had lost sight of Pitt at a park. It had lasted barely 10 minutes, but he thought he was going to go insane from the horrible sense of fear as if he had fallen into hell. He had shouted Pitt's name like a madman and traced back the path that they had been walking on. Thankfully, he found Pitt still standing where they had been separated. When he held Pitt in his arms once again, Josh had almost burst out in tears in an indescribable sense of relief.

Needless to say, if Josh held and comforted Chase right now like he would Pitt, his molars would be displaced for good. Josh didn't want to get implants already at such a young age. Moreover, Chase himself wasn't saying anything. Josh had no real excuse to stay.

"...Call me if you need anything. I will be waiting in the hallway," muttered Josh.

That was all that he could say. Josh waited for a moment, but Chase was still expressionless and reactionless. Josh was left with no choice but to turn around and leave the reception room. There was still an air of awkwardness about the two of them before he left. Feeling uneasy, Josh closed the door.

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The room was quiet. Neither of them tried to speak up first. Grayson, who was jeering until just a moment ago, still had a smile hanging from his mouth as he stared at his little brother. Chase, of course, wasn't smiling at all.

"So what happened to your face? It wasn't because you lashed out at your bodyguards and had a fight with one, right?" asked Grayson, snickering as if the thought amused him to no end.

Barely managing to hold back the urge to kick Grayson, Chase gritted his teeth and asked back, "What's your business here?"

"Seems like I guessed right. I'm very disappointed in you, Chase. You can't even fight properly. That's why I told you that you should receive proper training. Take some steroids and protein supplements, too." Anyone could see that Grayson had a tight, muscular build. Grayson scanned Chase, who was slimmer than him, and sighed. "I'm surprised you didn't break a bone."

"Grayson…" A joint was popping out on Chase's tightly rolled fist.

Grayson knew very well that Chase's fists packed a punch. He stopped teasing his younger brother and changed the subject. "It's starting to accumulate, isn't it? There's a party soon. You should come."

"I'm not going."

"Is that so?" murmured Grayson, narrowing his eyes at Chase's firm answer. "Have I already told you? Alex Jr. just birthed some pups last month."

Chase's face hardened. Grayson was still smiling.

Grayson continued, "To be precise, his girlfriend gave birth to some pups. A female was hella into Alex. He's got a strong game, just like Alex the First… Oh, right. You hate dogs, don't you? You like birds or something, no? Birds are useless compared to dogs. You've got a strange taste."

Chase didn't say anything. All he did was tremble feebly with a pale face as he sat staring at Grayson without even daring to blink.

Grayson added nonchalantly, "Did you find that guy from back then? Of course you couldn't, could you?"

"..."

"Chase," began Grayson, his voice even sweeter than before. "If you don't want something like that to happen again, you have to excrete your

pheromones.”

The sound of his own heartbeat rang in Chase’s ears. Suppressing his ragged breaths, Chase bit his lip.

Gazing intently at his little brother, Grayson whispered, “Now do you want to go to the party?”

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Click!

Josh looked up out of reflex at the sound of the door opening. It was Grayson who walked out of the door.

“Oh? You really were waiting,” said Grayson, as if he were truly surprised.

Chase was walking behind Grayson. Josh quickly scanned him up and down, but nothing seemed amiss except for the fact that blood hadn’t yet returned to his exceptionally pale face.

Having noticed Josh’s gaze, Grayson interjected, “Chase will be going out with me. He doesn't need any bodyguards… right, Chase?”

Josh shifted his gaze onto Chase’s face once again, taken aback by Grayson’s comment. However, Chase ignored Josh and turned around. Josh frantically called out, “Mr. Miller!”

Chase jolted and turned around, his face scrunched up in irritation.

Josh murmured squeakily, “Shouldn’t we still at least guard you? Should I go ready the car?”

“...It’s fine,” muttered Chase.

“Mr. Miller.”

“I said it’s fine! Leave me alone. Stop sticking your nose in my business!” Chase yelled fiercely.

Even Josh couldn’t convince him anymore. Chase cursed some more before turning around and quickly pacing away, out of Josh’s sight.

Like Josh, Grayson also gazed in the direction where Chase had disappeared to, letting out a short whistle. When Josh glanced up at him, Grayson smiled and said in a laid-back manner, “He just went up to get changed. He’ll be back soon. Not having him here gives y’all a better peace of mind, too, no?”

Josh didn’t answer. Grayson chuckled as if he understood everything.

“I tried to teach him the best I could, but I couldn’t do anything about his impatience. I’m sorry,” said Grayson.

Even though Grayson was apologizing, Josh couldn’t feel any genuineness from his words. His words were as sugarcoated as his mask-like smile; it almost felt as if he had just said it because it felt like the right time to say it.

Josh simply stared at him in silence as he couldn’t find any words to say. Suddenly, Grayson squinted his eyes.

‘Huh?’ Before Josh could even avoid it, Grayson grabbed Josh’s collar and pulled Josh toward him. He buried his nose in Josh’s neck and breathed in deeply. In the shock of the moment, Josh just let him. Grayson sniffed around a few more times before finally raising his head.

“What are you?” he asked in a low voice.

For a moment, Josh didn’t know what to answer. He only realized what Grayson had meant a few seconds later.

“...I’m a beta,” Josh answered the usual way.

“Really?” said Grayson, tilting his head. Josh had a weak pheromone scent to begin with. Since he was also taking meds, there was no way Grayson could find out.

That was what Josh firmly believed, but one corner of his heart felt anxious. He looked straight into Grayson’s eyes as calmly as possible. Grayson moved his hand that he had used to grab Josh’s collar to grab his chin.

“How strange.” Grayson, who had rudely grabbed onto a stranger’s chin to turn his head around from side to side, knitted his brows for the first time.

Grayson muttered, “Were betas these days all hit with a radioactive ray or something? Why do none of you look like betas?”

Without a word, Josh roughly shook off Grayson’s hand. Grayson let out a dramatic groan and smiled playfully.

“Apparently the prosecutor who’s facing Nathaniel in his current case is also a beta. You guys are from the east coast as well, right? Did you see the guy’s photo? Geez, it’s actually a scam to have that face as a beta. Is it something about the east coast?” yapped Grayson, even adding a sharp whistle at the end.

Josh didn’t laugh. All he did was quietly stare at Grayson.

Grayson narrowed his eyes. “Are you really a beta?”

“If you could please excuse me,” sighed Josh, trying to escape and avoid the needless exchange.

However, Grayson didn’t allow him. “Wait right there.”

Left with no choice but to pause in his tracks, Josh looked up at Grayson once again as if to urge him to state his business.

Suddenly, a sweet scent spread across the air. Grayson’s pupils turned golden. This was Josh’s second time seeing an Extreme Alpha’s eyes change color. Josh already knew what this meant. Grayson was pouring out his pheromones. However, Josh showed no reaction.

“Seems like it,” Grayson shrugged his shoulders and laughed after having pointlessly spilled out a tsunami of pheromones. “There’s no way I wouldn’t be able to smell it, no matter how much meds you take. You’re also showing no reaction to my pheromones,” he stroked his chin as if he were in deep thought. “Either you’re an Extreme Omega, or…”

The way Grayson had trailed off made Josh feel uneasy. Just as he swallowed hard, another voice interjected, “Why would an Extreme Omega be somewhere like this? It’s rare to see them even once in someone’s entire lifespan.”

Josh turned around to find Isaac standing there, his face blatantly showing his displeasure.

“That’s true,” laughed Grayson, who had also turned to face the voice. He immediately moved on and asked, “Has my brother come down?”

Isaac replied curtly, “Yes. He went first to the car that you brought here.”

“Oh, thank you,” said Grayson as he turned around. His words of gratitude sounded as empty as all of his other formalities.

As Josh watched Grayson walk away with Isaac, a belated surge of chills ran down his spine. What would have happened if he didn’t have his imprint? Josh secretly smothered his pounding heart. He could have been found out.

For the first time, he was thankful for the imprint that Chase had left. Josh didn’t need to worry about being shaken up by pheromones other than those of that man—unless another alpha left a new imprint on Josh.

‘But if Chase had ever poured out his pheromones on me, I would have immediately been turned on,’ Josh thought to himself.

Another bout of chills ran down his spine. As Josh swept up his forehead, he finally realized that his hands were shaking ever so slightly.

✦ ✦ ✦

After calming down a little, Josh headed to the monitoring room where Mark was. Mark immediately noticed that Josh wasn't in his best state.

Mark asked dubiously, "What happened? Did something happen with the guy who just came? Isaac said something strange."

"Something strange?" Josh asked back in confusion.

Mark said quickly, "I heard that the b*stard tried to hit on you. Pouring out his pheromones on a beta… What does he think he's doing? What if you get unfortunate and transition? I'm telling you, these Extreme Alphas…" He clicked his tongue and shook his head like he was sick of it.

Josh waited for a moment before asking, "Did they both leave already?"

"Yeah, a while ago." Mark continued nonchalantly, "You know where they went, right? That infamous o*gy party."

Josh did indeed. What Josh wanted to know, however, wasn't that. "What happened to guarding them?"

Mark nonchalantly repeated what Grayson had said. "That brother of his said that it was okay, and even C went off about how we didn't need to come. What could we do? We just sent them off on their own with a location tracker."

"*Hahh*…" Josh sighed deeply. If Chase got into an accident, he would blame them for it.

For a moment, Josh wondered if Chase was trying to get them into trouble on purpose. If his hobby was to bully others, that could very well be true—and Chase was indeed the kind of man whose hobby would be bullying others.

'But since he went with Grayson…' Josh thought to himself. He wasn't sure if that was a good thing or not. The thought was supposed to be comforting, but it made him even more anxious. Chase's brother, whom Josh had met for the first time, seemed fishy no matter how one looked at him. It was rare to see a man as suspicious-looking as him. Moreover, he didn't even bother trying to hide that fact.

Chase seemed to hate that man.

There must be as many things Chase hated as there were stars in the galaxy, but it was clear that Grayson Miller was the most hated of all. If so,

why had Chase followed him so obediently, frightened like a rabbit before an anaconda?

Chase Miller, a rabbit? The thought shocked Josh to no end.

“The problem is after he gets back. I hope he’s in a better mood then,” sighed Mark.

Josh didn’t say anything. Normally, people were in a better mood after intercourse; however, Josh couldn’t possibly put a finger on what it would be like in Chase’s case. He could only hope that he, too, was like normal people.

Josh had heard that getting imprinted stabilized the hormones of an Extreme Alpha and decreased the risk of overaccumulation. However, this was only true when the person who imprinted them offered continuous help. They had to at least stay close to them to provide them psychological ease. But who would be willing to stay with him constantly, and most importantly, who in this world could dare to imprint that man? Josh shook his head.

No matter how hard Josh thought about it, Chase’s bad temper was a minus to him from top to bottom. Since he thought he was so great, he would never think that he was wrong anyway.

Suddenly, Josh recalled Grayson’s smile and his low whispering voice.

What in the world had happened in that house? he wondered.

Chills ran down his spine.

✦ ✦ ✦

Chase returned past midnight. The security team, who were waiting nervously, saw that his tracker was getting closer to the mansion and stood on standby in advance. Unlike how he left, he came back in an antique sedan.

“Mr. Miller!” cried Mark, hastily opening the door of the car as soon as the sedan parked in front of the front entrance of the mansion. When he opened the door, a gush of pheromones washed over Josh, even though he was standing far away from them. Josh instinctively bit down on the candy in his mouth.

Chase, as he saw through the open car, was completely wasted and out of his head. He was unable to even open his eyes as he mumbled some things here and there. He was clearly pickled in drugs.

The stoic man who got out of the driver's seat confirmed that fact. "He took a lot of drugs at the party, so he's barely conscious. He'll wake up after a few days of rest. Please look after him in the meantime."

It was very common for Extreme Alphas to do drugs like ecstasy at their parties. However, seeing Chase like this gave Josh very mixed feelings—perhaps because Chase's face from when Josh had seen him last was still ingrained in his memory.

"What kind of drugs did he do? It won't harm his body, will it?" Josh asked carefully. Everyone stared at him. Josh quickly added, "If something happens, we'll have to call 911 right away."

Mark clicked his tongue. The man who had driven Chase home replied, "There won't be any problems just from something like this. As you would know, Extreme Alphas aren't harmed much by drugs or alcohol. He did take more than others, but he should be fine. This is how much he usually ends up taking. I also heard that he ingests them often even outside of parties."

The man quickly bid farewell, got back into the car, and left. The rest of them hurriedly carried Chase to his bedroom. Josh followed as well.

Cold air filled Chase's bedroom. Josh flinched at the desolateness of the room. It was as if nobody was living in the room. There was nothing on the wall where Warhol's painting had been hanging. All the fancy decorations were gone, and the only things that remained in the bedroom were a bed and a bedside table. Josh was the one who knew best how all the other furniture ended up gone.

"Whew," groaned Mark as he moved Chase onto the bed and straightened his back. Isaac and Seth pushed Chase toward the center of the bed.

Chase's entire body reeked of pheromones. Josh sensed a subtle difference in the scent from usual. Chase's scent was mixed with many other Extreme Alphas' scents. However, Josh was the only one who seemed to recognize the difference.

"There must have been a lot of Extreme Alphas at the party," hinted Josh.

Mark replied indifferently, "Well, yeah. It was that kind of party, after all."

"The scent is so strong," Isaac murmured to himself and shook his head. Seth also rubbed his temples like he was suffering from a headache.

Everyone complained that Chase had returned with too much pheromones on him, but nobody seemed to actually be able to distinguish the scents.

Is it because of the imprint? Josh wondered as he subconsciously fiddled with his ear under the earpiece.

Everyone surrounded the bed in a big circle and looked down at Chase, who was stretched out across the bed. His shirt was badly creased, untucked, and only partially buttoned. It was a good thing that he at least had his pants on properly. Josh was hit with an urge to comb back Chase's tangled blond hair with his fingers.

Before Josh could be tempted to reach out his hand, thankfully, Mark said, "Well, I don't think anything bad is going to happen. Why don't we leave him be?"

With his words as the trigger, everyone cleared out. Josh, who had entered the room last, was also the last to leave. When he looked back one last time, Chase was turning on the bed, muttering incomprehensibly.

✦ ✦ ✦

It was about two hours later that Josh had noticed that something was off about Chase. After rotation, Josh was monitoring the security camera screen around the mansion. When he got to Chase's bedroom, he halted.

Chase still seemed to be unconscious. He was definitely still under the influence of drugs, but despite that, he looked somewhat uncomfortable. The way he was tossing and turning seemed serious.

Josh hesitated for a moment. Even if he were to go to Chase in that state, there would be nothing that he could do. Moreover, Chase must be unknowingly pouring out his pheromones like mad. Josh didn't know what would become of him if he hastily approached Chase. Since Chase was under the influence of drugs, he must be in worse shape.

Only idiots jumped into a known danger. He attentively watched the monitor and fell into a moment of contemplation.

So what if a grown man has a nightmare? He'll be fine soon, Josh thought to himself.

However, when Chase curled up his body and painfully flailed around on the bed, Josh was unfortunately reminded of the small child who had reached out to him. He was reminded of the way the child had had a nightmare and cried.

“Daddy!” he had cried.

Pitt.

Josh anxiously tapped his finger on the armrest. Chase was convulsing agonizingly on the monitor. Josh could easily tell that he was in an even worse state.

Josh let out a groan from deep within his throat. He couldn’t bring himself to ignore it anymore.

You fucking idiot, Josh cursed himself out as he hurried over.

✦ ✦ ✦

“...!”

Before he even opened the door, the hallway was filled with pheromones. Josh held back his dizziness and adjusted his mask. It was a new product that was said to block out 98% of the scent of pheromones, but the remaining 2% was unfortunately more than enough to jumble up his brain.

Trying his best to ignore the scent, Josh opened the door. The pheromones that had been accumulated in the room immediately poured out at once.

Josh felt his consciousness begin to fade, and he staggered as he took a few steps back. He needed a moment to recollect himself. Bracing himself and walking into the bedroom required additional courage.

Chase was still lying on the bed as Josh had seen hours ago. However, since he had tossed and turned multiple times, the bedsheet was badly crumpled—one corner was completely pulled out of the mattress. Some of his shirt buttons were undone and others had been flung away, showing Chase’s bare body. It seemed pointless to even be wearing it.

“...” Chase mumbled something and tossed around again. He was now facing Josh, and Josh jolted.

“Ah…” Josh exclaimed subconsciously. Chase’s face as he lay gasping for breath, drenched in cold sweat, was as beautiful as that of an angel as well as disgustingly suggestive.

The way he was lying unconscious, stomach-down on the bed as his face looked up toward Josh, made Josh feel unexpectedly sadistic. Josh was taken aback by the very fact that he was feeling such an urge. He knew all too well that it was absurd to feel such a thing toward Chase of all people,

but he couldn’t deny his own emotion. Josh was taken by both guilt and surprise.

“Hahh… hahh… hahh… hahh...”

Chase’s breathing rang in Josh’s ears especially loudly. Josh felt as if his body temperature was rising as his breath became just as ragged as Chase’s. In a matter of seconds, his member became hard and his behind was drenched. If Josh’s conscience had been just 1% out of control, he would have gotten on top of Chase.

Instead, Josh desperately rejected his desire. This wasn’t the time for that, and he shouldn’t be doing something like that in the first place. He had to wake up Chase somehow. Chase seemed to be suffering from a nightmare. As proof, his twitching lips—oh, those goddamn lips—

Josh couldn’t think. Before he could go insane, he slapped his own face as hard as he could.

“Fuck!” cursed Josh. He was such a dumb idiot. Josh rubbed his stinging cheek and approached the bed.

Chase was still the same. He once again distorted his face and mumbled something. Every time he breathed, his firm pecs bobbed violently up and down. Josh gulped loudly.

“Mr. Miller? Wake up, Mr. Miller.” Josh grabbed Chase’s shoulder and gently shook it, but there was no sign of him waking up. Extreme Alphas weren’t supposed to be affected by alcohol or drugs very much; Josh became curious as to how much Chase had ingested to end up like this. He had bodyguarded other celebrities before, but he had never seen one this drunk. If normal people had done this much drugs, they wouldn’t be alive.

“St… I…” Chase murmured incomprehensibly. Was he dreaming? Josh tilted his head. He hesitated and brought his ear closer to Chase, and only then could he manage to understand what Chase was saying. “Stop it… Stop… Please…”

Josh was bewildered. What had he just heard? For Chase Miller to say something like that… Was he hearing things?

All the while, Chase continued to mumble, “Please, I’m sorry. It was all my fault… I’ll do as you say. I’ll do anything. Please… please!”

Josh was sure of it. Chase was having a nightmare. Whatever it was about, it had to be a terrible dream.

However, it didn’t end there. Breaking out in cold sweat, Chase continued to beg, “Forgive me. It’s— It’s my fault. Help me… don’t do this

to me. Stop, Nathaniel, Stacy… Please help me. Stop it, please, no, please __”

“Mr. Miller!” Josh called out in desperation. He had to wake Chase up quickly, even if Chase were to beat him up again.

Just then, Chase cried out shrilly, “Please take that dog away…!”

“Open your eyes, Chase!” shouted Josh. He had to drag Chase out of his nightmare right now. Josh was willing to do anything to wake him up. He raised his hand up, contemplating whether to slap Chase, when Chase suddenly shot open his eyes.

His purple irises were now gold. He had shown those eyes to Josh once before.

It was that day when Josh had become pregnant with Pitt.

He had exuded his pheromones from his entire body, spraying himself deep inside Josh.

As soon as Josh recalled his memory, the insides of his body flared up and he almost collapsed onto the floor.

In the next moment, Josh’s worries became true. Chase abruptly got up and pounced at Josh.

“...!”

Unprepared for the sudden attack, Josh rolled around on the floor with Chase. Before he could even get up, Chase got on top of him. Josh’s mask came off. Josh’s mouth lodged open, and their lips overlapped before any sound could escape.

He wasn’t in his right mind. Josh knew it. Chase was completely out of it right now. Tomorrow morning, he would remember nothing—just as he didn’t that time.

‘Then why not just let him?’ whispered the devil inside Josh. His body was on the verge of cramping from the sheer desire to hold this man and accept him into his body right now.

If only Josh could have s*x with Chase right now, he would gladly sell his soul. No, even his soul was too cheap a price to pay. Oh, if only he could do him right now!

However, one such experience was enough. Josh knew better than anyone else what the result of giving into seduction just once was. Moreover, he was being enticed by the same person. Josh might have been an idiot, but he knew better than this.

Meanwhile, Chase's hand had already pulled up Josh's shirt and was stroking his body. Josh brushed off the hand with all his might. He turned his head just in time to avoid Chase's lips that were closing in once again. He shoved Chase's shoulder away and slapped him hard across the face with his other hand.

A dull smack echoed in the room. Josh could only hope that the slap was enough to wake Chase up. If this didn't stop Chase, he would have to hit him again.

"Snap out of it, Mr. Miller!" yelled Josh. Even so, there was no way that he would seem threatening while he was looking up at Chase, lying on the floor under him.

Josh wasn't even confident in himself that it would have an effect. As expected, Chase came at him again. It was getting dangerous. Sirens blared in Josh's head, but with the state of his mind, they were far too quiet. When their lips intertwined violently, Josh completely gave up on his efforts to stop Chase. Josh didn't know anymore. The scent was driving him insane.

Josh hugged Chase's neck and they mixed their tongues deeply. Josh swallowed Chase's ragged breaths. Among the haziness of the kiss, Josh vaguely realized that it had been a very long time since he had made out with anyone like this.

When was my last kiss? Josh recalled the last few years, where he had been too busy raising Pitt that he hadn't even gone on a single date. He quickly pushed aside his thoughts. Even if his last kiss really was with this man, why was that important?

Chase forcefully pulled up Josh's shirt and fumbled around Josh's bare skin. Josh emptied his head completely. He wanted to touch Chase back. He wanted Chase to enter him like last time and make a mess out of his insides. He wanted Chase to fill him and to pour into him.

Ah, come inside me. Josh didn't know if he had said those words or just thought them to himself. All that was important to him at this moment was the kiss that they were sharing right now.

Chase's knee wedged itself in between Josh's legs, spreading them apart. Josh felt himself becoming drenched down there. Circulating shallow breaths in his mouth, Josh frantically traced his fingers on Chase's body. Chase bit down hard on Josh's lip. Josh let out a short wince, and it wasn't because of pain.

Josh could feel Chase's erection down there. The way Chase grinded on Josh's front was clear in objective. It felt almost as if Chase would soon rip through Josh's pants and brutally stick himself in. Josh knew that the moment would come very soon.

The fear and anticipation of Chase's thick rod piercing through him washed over Josh at once. A sudden memory of that day crossed Josh's mind and made him jolt.

If Chase entered him once again, Josh wouldn't be able to reject him this time, just as he couldn't last time. If anything, he would shiver in pleasure as it spread across his stomach. Josh already knew what would happen after that.

He would become pregnant.

Surprisingly, horror and excitement of equal size intersected. Josh hesitated for a moment before giving up on everything. Whatever the outcome was, could it compare to the pleasure of now? Josh could not possibly give it up.

Josh closed his eyes, wrapped his arms around Chase, and pulled him in closely. The kiss continued as Josh encouraged Chase and rubbed him down there.

However, when Josh squirmed to take his pants off, Chase suddenly fell quiet. Josh opened his eyes and pulled his lips away in confusion.

"Chase?" Josh called out softly. Chase dropped his face into Josh's shoulder. Puzzled, Josh just lay there as he took a moment to recollect his ragged breath. He belatedly realized that Chase had lost consciousness once again. Josh blinked stupidly.

Chase had fallen asleep after putting Josh in this state.

"This fucking—" Josh instinctively clenched his fists, feeling let down and enraged. He almost wholeheartedly struck a blow at Chase, but he managed to collect every last bit of his patience to hold himself back.

It was better this way. Josh had almost gotten pregnant again.

Josh reminded himself of this reality in an attempt to comfort himself, but he still couldn't calm down his anger. In the end, he controlled his power and smacked Chase on the head. Unfortunately, Chase didn't wake up.

For a moment, Josh blankly stared down at Chase in exasperation.

"Hahh…" Josh sighed emptily. He pulled himself up from the floor and wiggled out from under Chase. Josh hugged Chase, who was still stretched

out across the floor, from behind and dragged him onto the bed. He quickly left the bedroom and headed into the bathroom that was connected to the monitoring room in order to jerk himself off.

That goddamn fucking shitbag Chase Miller! As he frantically rubbed his member, Josh cursed endlessly at the man who had absurdly fallen asleep at the most important moment. The problem was that just thinking about the man made his aroused rod even harder in his hand. That made Josh even angrier.

After his habitual and mechanical masturbation, Josh quickly washed the pheromones off his face, arms, and other exposed areas of his body at the sink. He could finally feel his sense of reason return to him.

Josh sat back down in his seat feeling empty, but he still had work left to do. He had to delete the security clip. Josh wound back the timestamp and erased the clip of the bedroom camera.

Nobody would notice that there was a gap. Unless there was an incident, there would be no reason anyone should look back at the records.

After that incident, Josh watched Chase through the monitor until deep into the night. Thankfully, Chase didn't seem to be having any more nightmares. As proof, he didn't toss and turn or talk in his sleep. Watching him, Josh just felt bitter.

What in the world had just happened?

Josh himself was the biggest problem for being carried away again. It wasn't like he didn't know how that man was.

Josh blamed the incident entirely on Chase's pheromones. He also knew that the pheromones weren't the only problem. However, even if Josh were to admit that he did in fact genuinely want the man, what more could he do? There was no hope in this relationship. Josh was nothing to that man.

Letting out yet another deep sigh, Josh rubbed his tired eyes. The sun was rising in the distance. Two hours later, Josh asked Mark for some days off.

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Chapter 11

“Daddy!” As soon as the boy saw Josh’s face, he clung to Josh and refused to let go.

Oh, my angel. Feeling all of his exhaustion and stress being blasted away at once, he hugged his child tightly. Pitt rubbed his lips all over Josh’s face, smothering it with his saliva, but Josh was fine with it. Josh turned his head, showered the boy’s cheeks, lips, and forehead with kisses; and walked into the house with the boy in one arm.

“Welcome home, Josh,” greeted Josh’s mother as she kissed Josh on both cheeks. She returned to busily pacing around the kitchen and added, “Emma said that she’ll be back late tonight. Seems like she has a date.”

“Would you like some help?” Josh asked, sniffing the air for the sweet scent of pie.

Josh’s mother gently scolded him, “I told you not to do that. It makes you seem like you’re not eating properly. If you’re hungry, I’ll make you something. Why not take off your sunglasses?”

It wasn’t like Josh could hide it forever. Josh did as she asked and took off his sunglasses. When he looked up, his face was still blotched with bruises.

Josh’s mother opened her eyes wide and pressed, “Oh my, what happened? Where are you working right now? Why are you hurt? You didn’t go back to the army, did you?”

Josh smiled awkwardly. “No, I’m just bodyguarding a celebrity. It might look serious, but it’s really nothing.”

“Daddy, owie?” asked Pitt, staring at Josh’s colorfully dyed skin around his eyes. Pitt blinked innocently. Looking at his green eyes that looked just like Josh’s made Josh’s heart beat hard.

“Not at all,” said Josh as he showered Pitt with more kisses, unable to hold back his love. The boy giggled and squirmed. For the briefest moment, Josh could see Chase’s face in Pitt’s beaming smile. Josh once again realized how much they looked alike.

Josh’s mother was a beta, but his grandmother was an omega. His mother had told him once that he must have gotten the genes of his grandmother. Perhaps the reason why his pheromones were weak was because the gene had skipped a generation. Right now, Josh was the only

omega in the family, and everyone else was a beta. Although his family just consisted of his mother and his sister, everyone just assumed that Josh was a beta thanks to his family members all being betas.

Josh gazed into Pitt's face. This innocent child could either manifest as an Extreme Alpha like Chase, become an omega like Josh, or just live as a beta all his life. In any case, if he manifested, he would know before he turned twenty. It was very rare to transition after twenty.

Not knowing what his child would grow up to be made Josh more scared than excited. The very idea of this lovely boy growing up to be like Chase sent chills down his spine.

I hope Pitt only takes after his appearance, Josh thought to himself.

Somewhere along the line, the boy had crawled up Josh's lean body and smoothly ridden on his shoulders. Pitt grabbed on Josh's hair and played with it. Josh grabbed onto Pitt's legs and held them in place so that Pitt wouldn't get injured.

Josh's mother stretched out her neck and shouted, "Be careful so that Pitt doesn't hit his head. Putting him on your shoulders at your height is—"

"Yes, I know," Josh replied coolly and pecked Pitt's chubby calf.

"So how long is your vacation?" asked Josh's mother.

"Two days," replied Josh. "I go back tomorrow night."

"Just one night?"

Josh's mother seemed disappointed, but her gaze immediately shifted onto Pitt. Watching him cling to his father like that already, not wanting to separate from him, it wasn't difficult to picture what tomorrow night would be like. After all, the boy was at that age. It couldn't be helped.

Josh's mother shook her head and shot open her eyes like she had remembered something important. "Now that I think about it, I was supposed to pick up some medicine… could you make a trip for me? Fetch me these while you're there. We still have an hour left until the pie is done, so you should take Pitt out with you."

Josh took the shopping list from his mother and nodded. He lifted Pitt off his shoulders and held the boy in front of his body so that Pitt wouldn't hit his head. The boy struggled to climb back up.

Josh hugged the squirming body tightly to stop him from climbing. Only after he had stepped outside did he let the boy do what he wanted. Pitt quickly grabbed onto Josh's shoulders and pulled himself back up to his shoulders.

“Kyahaha!” Now in a good mood, Pitt bounced on his bottom and giggled like any other child. Back in Boston, Josh often put the boy on his shoulders and went for a walk around the streets. Josh parked at a shopping district parking lot that was about a block away from the pharmacy on purpose and, for the first time since leaving Boston, began walking with the boy on his shoulders.

As they walked, drivers in cars and pedestrians walking their dogs shot glances at them. Pitt was extremely excited to see people passing below his line of sight.

“Daddy, head!” Pitt knocked on Josh’s head with his little hand and rubbed his cheek playfully. Watching him act more childish than usual made Josh feel guilty that perhaps he had made Pitt lonely. Pitt continued to bounce and knock all over Josh’s head, but Josh let him be. It wasn’t long until they reached the pharmacy.

“Time to come down for a little bit, Pitt.” Josh quickly picked Pitt up and held the boy against his chest before the boy could even be surprised. While Josh picked up his mother’s medicine and a few more items on the list, Pitt continued to rest on Josh’s arm.

It didn’t take them very long to find all the items on the shopping list and put them in the basket. Josh scanned the barcode of the products at the self-checkout, but one item in particular refused to get scanned. After a few tries, a staff member who had been watching Josh quickly walked up to him for help.

“Your son is very cute,” she smiled as she looked up at Josh. Her eyes were filled with fondness.

“Isn’t he?” Being a helplessly doting father, Josh planted a kiss on Pitt’s forehead as the boy continued to sit on Josh’s arm.

“Yes, I’m sure he’ll grow up to be as dashing as his father.”

“Thank you,” replied Josh as he inserted the bill into the machine and picked up his change. He glanced at the staff member’s nametag and said, “Have a nice day, Hannah.”

The staff member’s face brightened up. Josh turned around and jolted when he saw a familiar face.

“Emma,” Josh smiled as he approached her. “I thought you were going to be late. Why are you here?”

“My plans were cancelled. I stopped by because Mom asked me to get some things for her… but I guess you bought them already,” said Emma,

glancing into the bag that Josh was holding. She gently jabbed him on the side with her elbow. “Stop hitting on girls, you creep. You come back with that face just to do that?”

“What did I do?” Josh protested, but Emma didn’t fall for it.

“You don’t need to bother hiding it. You have an imprint, and since it’s you we’re talking about, alphas won’t even think about looking down on you and pouncing on you just because you’re an omega. If other women knew you were an omega, there would be much less of them trying to hit you up. Are you just enjoying the attention? You’re actually such a creep.”

“Creepy creep!” cooed Pitt.

“Bad word,” Josh said sternly and glanced at Emma. “Watch what you say in front of children. I just don’t see the point of announcing it to the world. It also gets in the way of my work.”

Josh put the boy on his shoulders so that he would quickly forget about the bad word. Pitt went back to playing with Josh’s head.

Walking beside Josh, Emma began, “How’s work? It seemed like the compensation was insanely good. Those jobs always tend to work you down to the bone.” She was looking at Josh’s face injuries.

Josh replied nonchalantly, “I work as much as I get paid… Ouch.”

“Pitt, Daddy’s gonna go bald!” Emma stopped Pitt and continued, “Still, good thing you’re working not too far from home. It’d be nice to see your face like this on your days off.”

Whenever my next day off is, Josh grumbled in his head.

Emma changed the subject. “Mom kinda asked the other day if you were seeing anyone these days.”

“And?” asked Josh.

“I told her I didn’t know. It’s the truth.”

“Yeah,” Josh muttered as they continued to walk along.

Emma glanced up at Josh. “Isn’t raising a kid by yourself difficult? Why not get introduced to someone or find someone from your workplace? You said that everyone’s an alpha except for one that’s already married or something.”

“It’s not good to date someone from work,” Josh replied sternly.

Emma clicked her tongue. “Romance is bound to sprout at the workplace. Well, it’s not like you’ve ever dated properly. What would you know? You don’t stop anyone from coming or going. I wonder how you even got pregnant.”

Emma quickly caught herself and glanced at Pitt before lowering her gaze. Pitt was paying no heed at all; he simply continued to play with Josh's hair, ruffing his finger through it.

"Um, about Pitt's papa… are you sure you're not in touch with him? You're lying, aren't you?"

"Why?"

"What do you mean why?" Emma squinted. "There's no way someone as meticulous about self-management as you are would just sleep with anyone and get pregnant. It must have been someone you knew. Of course it's weird that you haven't even talked to them once since then."

"…I'm not that meticulous."

"Anyway, this isn't like you. You never got into any accidents, even during your heat cycle."

It was true. It was an unexpected one-time accident. Having been in his heat when it had happened was unexpected in the first place.

If it weren't for that man, he wouldn't have been forced into his heat cycle.

Josh quickly felt guilty about this thought. It was the greatest fortune of his life. Thanks to that, he was able to be pregnant with Pitt—his one and only treasure.

Josh coldly drew the line. "I just don't see him anymore because there hasn't been a need to. I don't intend to try to get back together with him or anything. And I'm sorry, Emma, but don't forget that I was the most popular quarterback in high school until I manifested."

"You mean just for that one year?"

"Yes. I had many, many girlfriends in that year. As you know, even right until I had Pitt."

Emma rolled her eyes. Indeed, Josh had never not had a girlfriend until he had met Chase Miller. Emma also knew this quite well.

"No doubt. There was one time you kissed one girlfriend in the morning and went on a date with a different girlfriend in the evening."

"I broke up with my girlfriend during lunchtime and got confessed to by another girl after school," corrected Josh. Emma didn't seem to believe him.

Emma scoffed and turned her head. "In all fairness, you suddenly cut off all your social ties and then reappeared one day with Pitt in your arms. I was wondering how long you were going to stay a prude for. Why not get a girlfriend again? Nobody would care that you're an omega."

Josh couldn’t tell her that the moment he laid eyes on Chase Miller, everyone else in the world seemed like off-season Halloween pumpkins. When he thought that he would finally be able to forget that man, he was back to the starting point.

Josh feigned innocence and replied, “I’ll live as a prude until Pitt grows up.”

Emma blinked. “So you do plan on getting a girlfriend?”

“Why not?” Josh let out an airy laugh. “There won’t be any need to get worried about getting pregnant. What better way is there to have some fun? If it weren’t for my job, being an omega wouldn’t be so bad. Though, of course, it would only work well if the said partner shared the same viewpoint.”

“…You don’t plan on dating another alpha or beta? Could it be that you still haven’t forgotten about Pitt’s papa?” Emma asked carefully.

Josh took a very short second before answering, “I don’t intend to have another child.”

That man would be his first and last partner as an omega. Josh didn’t plan on sleeping with another man. In all honesty, Josh was closer to a heterosexual. Both in the past and even now, he was more attracted to women than men.

Excluding Chase Miller, that was.

Just thinking about him immediately made Josh scrunch up his brows. It made him bitter that the only man he had slept with was none other than that b*stard.

Just then, Pitt giggled above Josh’s head and swayed his body. Josh’s frown was quickly melted by the child’s adorableness. Josh lifted Pitt off of his shoulders and held the boy in his arms. Meeting the boy’s eyes automatically brought a smile to Josh’s mouth. Josh stared at Pitt’s face with a warm expression but soon came to a jolt. He had been reminded of a truly unwelcome man from the face of his beloved child.

For a moment, Josh’s face was filled with a plethora of emotions. Emma looked up at him, perplexed. Josh pretended that nothing had happened and propped Pitt onto one arm, staring straight ahead. Once he was done with this job, he would never come back to California—that was what Josh had decided at that moment.

Despite that, the image that popped back into his head was of that man looking up at him with tears in his eyes. The sound of his weak, feeble

breaths echoed clearly in his ears once again.

No one but Josh knew about what happened that night.

It was yet another memory that only he had.

Just as Josh reached that thought, Emma asked, “Won’t Pitt want to know about his papa once he gets a little older?”

“Probably,” Josh muttered indifferently. There were many families out there that only had one parent. Pitt would come to learn to accept that fact naturally.

That man could also just live freely like he always did.

Josh knitted his brows without even realizing it. It was something that he thought was obvious until now. Why was it making him feel so uncomfortable now? He didn’t want to think too deeply about it.

However, despite trying to wipe it out of his mind, Chase’s frightened look and watery eyes refused to disappear and continued to linger in his head.

…So did the kiss that had made him hot inside.

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Chapter 12

“Lookin real good there, aren’t you?” Henry was the first to speak to Josh, who had just returned from his time off. He also looked a lot better than the last time Josh had seen him.

“He copied and saved the clip from last time. Sounds like he watches it over and over,” whispered Seth. In other words, Henry very much enjoyed watching Josh and Chase beat each other up whenever he had time.

As proof, Henry, who was always grumbling, was beaming today as he patted Josh on the shoulder. “It’s nice visiting home, innit? How was the kid, playing well? Bring him some time. I’ll treat him to something good.”

Henry had once gone as far as to scream and yell at a little child who had cut in front of the line at a theme park, calling him a future criminal. He absolutely despised kids. He must have been in an incredibly good mood for him to suggest that Josh bring Pitt. Of course, Josh had no intention to do so at all.

“Well, yeah. Thanks,” Josh replied loosely and entered the mansion. Just as he was about to go find Mark, he saw Isaac running toward him from afar.

“Josh! Did you have a good time?” said Isaac, quite literally prancing toward him with a flushed face due to running.

Josh, who had waited for Isaac to reach him, looked up and replied, “Yeah, have you been well? Anything special?”

“Here? Not much, of course. Did you have a restful time at home?” Isaac asked casually.

Josh smiled bitterly. “Rest? Nah. I was asked to fix things all around the house, so I basically spent two whole days just fixing things. At least I didn’t need to tear out our toilet. Why does grass grow so quickly? I’m tempted to just get rid of all of it and pour cement over it.”

“I see. It would be troublesome if the neighbors reported you for overgrown weeds or something,” Isaac laughed. After a moment of hesitation, he added, “...I missed you.”

“Mmh, yeah. Where’s Mark?” Josh changed the subject without thinking about it much.

Isaac seemed taken aback, but he soon pointed in one direction without showing any other reaction. “He’s eating in the dining hall.”

“Thanks. I’ll catch you later,” Josh greeted and left. Isaac seemed like he wanted to say something else and remained standing for a moment, but he soon turned around.

Is something up? Josh wondered, confused by Isaac’s strange behavior. Josh hastened his feet. As he climbed the stairs to the second floor, the landscape outside the window caught his eye.

Josh could see the pool next to the sidewalk below. It was the very pool where Chase had tried to kill Josh. Recalling the horrifying memory sent shivers down his spine. The beach chair that Chase was lounging on that day was empty.

Just then, Josh caught himself looking for Chase without even realizing it. Was he resting in his room right now?

✦ ✦ ✦

“Hahh… hahh… hahh… hahh.”

The ragged breaths spat out by the man below him unnerved his ears. Small blossoms were protruding from his firm chest that rose wildly up and down. When Chase rubbed the erect protrusions with his lips, the man moaned loudly.

“Ah… hahh… ah!” As the other’s body trembled lightly, the junction between them vibrated along with the shudder. Chase came again at the unbearable stimulation. Although he had poured himself into the man many times already, his rod did not seem to want to shrink. His member was as hard as the man’s nipples, reaching his navel. Chase grabbed the man’s hand as he tried to rub himself and pinned it onto the bed, thrusting his hips hard.

“Ah!” The man convulsed and shrieked. However, Chase knew that it wasn’t because of pain. As proof, the man’s neatly sculpted face was flushed red, and he was huffing his breath as his eyes flipped halfway up. Chase stared into the man’s face as he propelled his waist.

Slap, slap, slap, slap… Sharp sounds of skin slapping against skin echoed repeatedly across the room. The man’s tight buttocks nibbled at Chase’s member, pulling him in. His inner walls hugged Chase’s rod as if it were tailor-made. Uncontrollable moans escaped his mouth.

“Hahh… hah… ah… hahh… ah!”

“Ngh… kuuh… ngah… ah…”

Their moans and gasps tangled sloppily, just like their intertwined lower bodies. He wanted to go in deeper. Overcome with impatience, he thrust his hips in a flurry.

Chase wanted to shove himself all the way to the base of his trunk and drench him inside. No, he wanted to marinate this man's veins in his cream. That way, every time this man breathed and blinked, he would smell Chase's scent. He would be filled with Chase Miller.

"Ah… hahh… ahh… ngh!" The man didn't hold back his moans. Just the very thought of filling him was enough to make Chase's brain hazy. Pleasure spread across his body.

All of you is mine, Chase thought.

"...Ngah!" Inserting himself down to the base wasn't enough. Chase pressed hard and rubbed himself against the man. The tender skin that had been rubbed with Chase's thick hair twitched. The man was completely taken by this act.

"Hahh… ahhh…" The man's hoarse voice trickled out between his breaths as he shivered. His stomach—no, his everywhere was soaked in white from the many times he had come. Chase glanced at the man meaninglessly spraying his fluid and pushed his lower body hard against the man once again, shoving his entire rod in. He fixed his member inside the man from tip to base.

"...Guh!" The man's moans changed. For the first time, pain crossed his face over the look of sensual dreaminess. The man looked panicked as he tried to grab Chase's shoulders and push him away. However, Chase ignored it and inflated his tip even more.

I will put all of myself in, Chase thought to himself as he clenched his teeth under his ragged breath. He would push all of himself into this man. He would miss nothing until it pooled, overflowed, and turned all of this man into his.

"I-it hurts, ah…" the man groaned. As he huffed out shallow breaths, saliva dripped down his lips. Chase stretched out his tongue and licked it off before interlocking his lips with those of the other man. The man's pained moans diminished helplessly between the lips that were clasped securely together, just like their lower half.

All the while, Chase continued to come. He had poured out an immense amount of fluid, but nothing leaked out. Chase plugged the man by swelling up his rod and filled the man with his nectar.

Chase was determined to continue until the man was pregnant.

When their lips finally separated, the man was completely out of it from pain as well as the pheromones that had pickled his entire body. When Chase kissed the man's huffing lips once again, he came to a realization.

Had he ever felt so complete in his entire life?

No, he had never. He was always empty, and his thirst was never satisfied. At this moment, however, he was perfect—no, he was made perfect by this man.

The man belonged to him.

Chase tightly held the man's firm body and wrapped the other's body completely in his own. If he were to lose this man, he would become empty once again.

"Get pregnant," he whispered through ragged breaths. He rubbed his lips lustfully against the man's ear—one of the only parts of the man's body that wasn't covered by elegant musculature. Like a spell, he repeated, "Get pregnant. Have my child."

"Nnh… ngh…" The man seemed completely out of his mind, lost in a mixture of pain and pleasure.

Chase lightly nudged the man's outer ears with his lips. "Every single inch of you belongs to me."

Chase bore his teeth and clamped down on the man's earflap. The man's insides contracted tightly in pain. Chase hugged the man tight, restricting any movements, and continued biting ruthlessly. Blood pooled in his mouth, and Chase's consciousness also started to become cloudy from the man's pheromones.

Now the man was completely his.

Having perfectly imprinted himself on what belonged to him, Chase fell asleep in satisfaction. He was still buried deep inside the man.

He was perfect… until he opened his eyes.

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♬♪♪♬♬♩…

A familiar ringtone woke a piece of Chase's consciousness. He scowled and turned around with a low moan. Soon, the ringing stopped, and a new sound trickled out.

“Mr. Miller? Have you woken up? Hello, are you listening? You’re there, aren’t you, Mr. Miller?” probed his manager through the automatic answering machine. Chase closed his eyes for a good moment and didn’t say anything. All he did was let out a low, irritated groan.

When the manager confirmed Chase’s reaction, she quickly got down to business without dragging on. “I got my hands on the next volume of the original novel of the upcoming movie you’ll be filming. I’ll bring them to you soon. Did you finish reading the one I sent you last time? There’s a lot of volumes, but it might be best to read them all. That way, you’ll be able to analyze the characters better. This volume in particular was really hard to find. All the other volumes aside, you have to read this one. Almost everything about Dr. Flame is in that book. You probably know about him a fair bit since it’s such a popular series, but acting as him is a different story. You should do your research. It’s an old series with a huge fandom, so there’s a lot of caution that needs to be taken, but I know you’ll do great. After all, Mr. Pittman recommended the role to you directly… You know I’m just speaking out of concern for you when I tell you that the terrorism on Mr. Pittman technically happened when we were dallying from signing the contract. Since you made excuses about signing— Anyway, what I’m trying to say is that as long as you do well in your role, the whole conflict during the contract process will be forgotten…”

The manager continued to rant on, but Chase wasn’t even listening to half the things that she said. All he did was silently regulate his breathing.

The manager knew that this would be his reaction and quickly finished, “All right, Mr. Miller. Let me know if you need anything else. I’ll be there in the afternoon.”

The call finally ended and silence settled in. Chase blinked slowly. He was still a little dizzy, but it was nothing he couldn’t endure. He laid still in bed for a second before slowly sitting up.

“Hahh…” Along with a deep sigh, Chase slumped his upper body and sat still.

‘What day is it today?’ he wondered as he traced back his memories, but there was no way for him to know. It was common for Extreme Alphas to sleep for a minimum of one day up to three whole days. Since Chase had also taken drugs, he couldn’t tell whatsoever.

Chase put his hand on his forehead and sighed once again before knitting his eyebrows. It felt like he had dreamed about something, but he

couldn’t remember what it was about. His head was hazy as if he were navigating through mist.

Chase sat frozen for a moment before frantically looking down at his body and the bed. He patted around the bedsheet, smelled it, and stood up to check all corners of his body before finally relaxing his shoulders in relief.

“Phew…” he sighed. Now that the anxiety had eased, he felt a sudden surge of hunger. When he glanced at the clock, it was already almost lunchtime.

I should eat something, Chase thought to himself in his foggy brain. He pressed onto his forehead with one hand and picked up the phone with the other. He dialed the extension number, but nobody answered even when the connection ringtone rang 10 times.

Why aren’t those goddamn bastards picking up?’ Chase thought annoyedly, hanging up the phone. As he left the room and walked along the long hallway, he became more and more angry.

What did he hire the security guards for if they were just going to be idiots spacing out at the security footage monitors or drinking beer while watching some stupid sports match? Chase didn’t get the point of making those useless pieces of trash guard the corners of the house.

‘See? Look at that moron,’ Chase thought to himself as he stood next to the kitchen entrance, gritting his teeth. As expected, free labor was lazing around inside, drinking a cup of coffee without a care in the world.

Chase leaned against the doorframe and scrunched up his brow as he glared at the back of Josh’s head.

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“Hahh…” Josh sighed and stared at the garden outside. He had just finished his meal and made himself a cup of hot coffee with some beans that he had ground himself. He still had some time left until his rotation. Josh took the coffee to his mouth and reflected on the pleasantness of his rare easy morning.

‘Maybe I’ll give Pitt a call,’ Josh thought to himself. He had seen his son’s face just the day before, but his heart was already tight from longing. Hoping to at least hear the boy’s voice, Josh quickly searched for his phone. Just then—

“You there,” called someone’s voice coldly.

Josh instinctively turned toward the sudden voice. When he recognized the man leaning against the doorframe, he was taken by yet another surprise. Chase was glaring at him in the doorway.

Josh could only stand and blink at this unexpected situation. He belatedly stumbled up from his chair and tried to find something to say, but nothing came to mind. His head that was filled with Pitt was now instantly filled with something different.

A heavy silence followed. For some reason, Chase simply stared at him without a word.

After a long while, Josh finally managed to squeeze something out. "...Was there something you wanted to say?"

Instead of answering, Chase shifted down his gaze and scanned Josh's long limbs and slim, muscular body that didn't seem to have even a single pound of fat. He subconsciously creased his brow.

'Why does he work as a bodyguard with that face? He looks like he should be the one getting bodyguarded,' Chase thought.

"...?" Josh tilted his head in confusion when Chase simply stared at him without a word.

Chase didn't like his reaction at all. However, when he finally opened his mouth, something completely different leaped out of his mouth. "Why is nobody answering the call, you goddamn bastards?"

Chase cursed internally, but he knew all too well that this was all he could say. It wasn't like he could ask Josh why he was working as a bodyguard despite having good looks. Chase wanted to bite off his own tongue.

"Oh," exclaimed Josh, finally having understood. Chase didn't like that either, but Josh couldn't guess at all. He had finally realized that this was the reason why Chase had come all the way down to the kitchen.

Thankful that he now knew the reason and that they had something to talk about, Josh quickly asked, "They must have not heard it. What did you need?"

Still with a scowl on his face, Chase said, "My meal."

"Meal?" Josh asked back reflexively before catching himself. He expected Chase's fist to come flying his way, but for some reason, Chase just remained where he stood and didn't move. All he did was glare at Josh with bloodshot eyes.

“My meal. Don’t you speak English? You don’t understand? Are your ears just for decoration?” Chase replied scornfully.

Josh knitted his brows, but he held himself back. After all, he was Chase’s employee.

“I’ll have it prepared,” Josh replied as formally as possible and turned around. Chase watched Josh open the refrigerator to prepare his food, but Chase didn’t move from his spot.

Josh ignored Chase’s stare and was about to microwave the pre-prepped dish when he came to a sudden halt. All he had to do was punch the time into the microwave as it was written on the package. However, what made him hesitate was—stupidly enough—the green peas that were on the plate.

‘That man also hates peas,’ Josh thought to himself. Thinking about the plate that was always cleared of everything but peas, he was automatically reminded of Pitt. Josh wondered why Pitt had to take after something like that out of all things, but thinking about something like that wouldn’t change anything.

“...What are you doing?” asked Chase. This time, he looked truly confused. However, Josh quickly rummaged through the fridge and pulled out the ingredients that he needed in an instant without turning around. When he slammed the door shut and turned around to face Chase, no sign of irritation remained on his face.

“Preparing a meal, of course,” Josh smiled.

Chase raised his eyebrows in doubt. “You’re not going to poison me, are you?”

“What?” Josh asked back, dumbfounded. However, Chase was being completely serious. Josh let out a small scoff. “If I wanted to poison you, I would have done so a long time ago. It’s not like I can’t poison pre-prepped food.”

“You could have been looking for an opportunity to do it all yourself,” Chase said, still doubtful.

Josh smiled wholeheartedly at Chase. Chase saw Josh’s face, flinched, and fixed his gaze on Josh. Josh elegantly drew a curve with his arm and stretched it out, bowing his torso.

“I am truly honored to be granted this glorious opportunity, milord. Would you like the poison on your steak or on your fork? Please choose as you wish. I will be happy to oblige,” Josh said exaggeratedly.

Although it was clearly a sarcastic remark, it wasn't offensive at all. Other people would have burst out in laughter. Chase was also taken aback by the fact that he was the one feeling flustered.

'What the hell is wrong with that b*stard?' Chase thought as he blinked and stared. Then he realized that Josh was smiling very brightly, contrary to the words that had come out of his mouth. Once Chase figured out what had diminished his fighting spirit, he dropped his mouth in disbelief. 'Better personality than me, my *ss. This motherfucker doesn't even know himself.'

As Chase stared at Josh with a baffled expression, Josh turned around with a smile still on his face. Internally, however, he thought, 'It might be much more efficient to just control his temper than to doubt whether every meal has been poisoned.'

While Josh grilled the meat, made the sauce, and boiled the vegetables, Chase stood in his spot and didn't move. Josh felt Chase's gaze clinging persistently to his back, but he completely ignored it.

Whenever it was too difficult to place Pitt on his shoulders while cooking, Josh usually sat the boy down on the baby chair and fastened the belt. Pitt would then continuously chase Josh's movements with his eyes filled with longing. It was truly difficult to turn away from a child's gaze as it stabbed him in the back. Compared to that, the gaze of an arrogant adult man was nothing.

Thinking about the boy who had been so taken by tracking Josh with his gaze, oblivious to the fact that he was drooling, made Josh smile.

When Josh let out a little chuckle, Chase blurted, "What's so funny?"

'Oops,' Josh flinched. He was picked on by Chase right away, but thankfully, he could use the do-not rules to his advantage. As per the rules, he ignored Chase's question.

"You," said Chase once again, smiling irritably. It seemed that Josh had hit a sore spot. "Are you ignoring me right now?"

Josh was conflicted. At this rate, it seemed like he would get beaten up whether he abided by the rules or not. Although an added article on the contract stated that Chase would stop assaulting his bodyguards, Josh was doubtful that it would get kept. In any case, getting hit would be his loss. He also didn't want to particularly experience Chase's punches again, which hurt more than he had expected. Josh made up his mind and opened his mouth.

“There is an article in the contract that prohibits me from answering even when spoken to. I was just following the contract,” said Josh.

However, what returned to him was the usual curses and sarcasm. “Who told you to ignore me every time? Can you really not read the room? You should speak when I need you to, you fucking dumbass. Are you that smooth-brained?”

Chase was speaking more than usual—likely out of frustration. Despite that, none of what he had said was mildly kind to the ears.

Josh had to take a moment to take a deep breath and control his anger. He was tempted to just beat the b*stard up and go to jail, but Pitt’s face popped into his head and he was forced to hold himself back.

Instead, Josh flashed a formal smile and replied, “I’m sorry. I will try to make better judgments next time.”

“...” Chase simply stared back without a word.

Josh lost to his threatening aura and lied, “I was just thinking about a comedy program I watched the other day. It didn’t mean much.” He quickly changed the subject before Chase could pick on him again. “What drink would you like? Still water, sparkling water, or I could—”

“Hey.”

“Yes?” Josh replied promptly this time.

Chase gritted his teeth and spat, “Shut up.”

“...” Josh shut his mouth as he had been told and began to quickly set the table instead. He placed down the table mat; set the cleanly folded napkin, fork, and knife; and served the cooked meal on the plate.

As Josh placed down the perfectly plated dish, Chase continued to stare at him. Josh ignored him and pulled out a bottle of wine from the cellar on the wall. He pulled out the cork and smelled the wine instead of doing a proper taste sample. He poured the wine into a glass and smiled as he took a couple of steps back. This time, Josh was smiling from the bottom of his heart.

“Go ahead, Mr. Miller,” Josh gestured.

For a moment, Chase stared at Josh in silence. Josh smiled once again. Chase, who hadn’t even moved an inch until then, finally started moving.

In just a few strides, he walked across the big kitchen and reached the dining table. Just as Chase was about to sit down, Josh suddenly widened his eyes as if he had suddenly remembered something. “Oh, right.”

As Chase looked at Josh with his brows knitted, Josh turned around right away and returned with a small frying pan. With a wide smile, Josh poured its contents onto the steak right before Chase's eyes.

They were roasted green peas.

"..." Chase stared silently at the plate. After a few seconds of stillness, his gaze slowly shifted over.

When their eyes finally met, Josh beamed. "I forgot to put in the poison." Chase's face turned more and more threatening. However, Josh paid no heed and added, "Enjoy your meal. Once you ingest the poison, your temper should die down."

"..."

"Along with you, sire, that is." Josh quickly pulled out a chair for Chase, just like he used to when he had gone on dates with his ex-girlfriends.

This man had a prettier face and a worse temper than anyone Josh had ever dated.

Pondering over this fact, Josh waited for Chase to sit. On one hand, he was curious as to what kind of reaction Chase would show. His heart started to beat harder for real.

Chase glanced down at his plate. All he saw was a mountain of peas; the steak was nowhere to be seen. Josh was starting to think that Chase might throw the plate straight off the table, but Chase suddenly began to move. He walked around the table and toward the chair where Josh was waiting. It seemed like he was just going to sit down. Josh was mildly disappointed.

Suddenly, Chase grabbed Josh's arm.

"...?" Taken aback by the unanticipated course of action, Josh instinctively looked up at Chase. Chase was looking down at him with a scowl. Their eyes met once again. This time, the distance between their faces was too close.

His cloudy purple eyes were staring into Josh's eyes. For a moment, they stood still like that, gazing at each other. Josh gulped. He knew all too well who that man in front of him was. He knew that he should take back his hand and step back as if nothing had happened. He knew that he was absolutely nothing in Chase's eyes.

Unfortunately, however, his body didn't move. He held his breath as he stared absentmindedly at Chase as if he had been captured.

It was truly insane. How could such a face belong to a human?

“Hahh…” Chase let out a small sigh. Josh almost thought he had heard the nostalgic chocolate song in his head. The cute blonde girl in the advertisement was now all grown up, standing before him. He had dreamt of kissing that girl every night. He was in love—a clumsy, innocent love—with the girl who was much smaller and lovelier than him.

The girl was now nowhere to be seen, but Josh’s heart continued to thrash about as if he had returned to being that little boy once more.

Chase’s long eyelashes slowly bobbed up and down right before Josh’s eyes. The unfocused, purple eyes disappeared for a second before reappearing.

“You,” whispered Chase, his voice as sweet as his face, “do you really want to die?”

He was smiling. His grip on Josh’s wrist was gradually becoming stronger as if he were actually about to strangle Josh by the throat. The tip of Josh’s fingers started to tingle and his arm trembled, but despite that, Josh still couldn’t peel his eyes off of Chase.

Josh squawked, “No.”

“What’s this, then? Are you dying to be killed?” Chase’s voice sank lower. His temper was at its limit. At this rate, he really seemed like he could beat Josh to death.

Even with all the tension in the air, Josh commented jokingly, “I’d die to see you kill it in bed.”

“...”

As soon as Josh saw Chase’s expression, he immediately realized that his joke did not work this time. He was about to die in the kitchen instead of the bed. Josh quickly recalled all the kitchen tools they had.

Would Chase stick his head into the oven? Would he be stabbed with a knife? Chase wouldn’t shove him into the refrigerator, would he?

“You…” Chase clenched his teeth and trembled. When Josh saw him raise his hand, Josh closed his eyes out of reflex. He would be lucky if this ended with just some punches.

“...” Josh tensed up, expecting to get slapped across the face. However, the moment never came. Josh counted to 10 in his head and forced open his eyes.

Chase was looking down at him. His hand was still up, frozen in the middle of the air. Josh blinked in confusion.

‘What is this man doing?’ wondered Josh.

For some reason, Chase was just staring into Josh's face with his brow creased. Josh hesitated and opened his mouth, but no sound came out.

Somehow, they were just gazing at each other at a distance small enough to feel each other's breaths. Neither of them averted their gaze or stepped back first. Not knowing Chase's intentions, Josh simply continued to return Chase's gaze.

Chase, who wasn't moving at all, tilted his head slowly. However, Josh didn't realize. Only after Chase took a deep breath did Josh belatedly freeze up. Chase was sniffing Josh's scent.

At that moment, Josh's head went blank. He had to push Chase away, but his body didn't move. Chase might even become suspicious of him for overreacting.

Did I take my meds today? Was that yesterday? Did I not take them yet today? Josh wondered frantically.

He couldn't remember.

It's okay, my scent is weak to begin with, Josh tried to comfort himself. He often skipped taking his meds, but nobody had noticed. Even he himself sometimes forgot that he was an omega when he wasn't in heat. There was no way that anyone would find out.

"Mr. Miller," Josh began nonchalantly. "May I take my leave now?"

Chase gave no answer; instead, he remained frozen. Josh's heart felt as if it would burst with anxiety. He was silent for a long time with a scowl on his face. Josh couldn't tell what he was thinking about at all.

Chase abruptly let go of his hand that was keeping hold of Josh. Josh staggered backward. Chase scrunched up his brow. Josh saw that Chase was about to say something and quickly forged a smile. "I should get going, Mr. Miller."

Josh practically ran away and disappeared quickly. Chase was left by himself. He stood in his spot for a long while, staring in the direction toward which Josh had disappeared. His brow remained creased.

One scene from his dream that had been forgotten kept flickering before his eyes. Chase irritably swept up his hair.

He must be insane for thinking that Josh looked like the man in his dream.

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Chapter 13

“Blackmail?”

When everyone had gathered, Mark showed them the note with a rigid face. The original note had been given to the investigation office, so what they had was just a copy of the note. The short, crude blackmail note was a collage of magazine cut-outs.

Let there be God’s judgment unto the Extreme Alphas!

Josh examined the paper front and back before handing it over to Seth, who was next in line. Seth handed it to Henry, and Henry handed it to Isaac.

When everyone had seen the note, Mark added, “We filter out the fan letters or troll letters sent by anti-fans to the office, but this one seems different from the rest.”

“There’s no address on the envelope,” Josh pointed out.

Mark nodded. “Somebody must have put it in the mailbox directly, but the security camera showed nobody suspicious. What could have happened?”

Seth murmured with a serious expression, “Perhaps one of the visitors…”

Everyone thought the same and pursed their lips. Mark continued, “Everyone who goes in and out of the mansion has been doing so for at least over a year. The companies they’re from are all saying that they’ve been hired after a thorough identity check… Still, we should keep all of them on the list of suspects just in case.”

“Is this the doing of some kind of religious organization after all?” asked Isaac.

Mark shook his head. “We can’t conclude that from this note alone. It could be camouflage. Perhaps just one of those behind it is involved with a religious organization. Everything aside, what’s most important is how we will last safely through the party that will be held soon.”

“A party?” Seth asked as soon as the words escaped Mark’s mouth. However, he quickly realized what Mark was talking about. Everyone stared at Seth sympathetically as Seth put his hands around his head in exasperation.

Chase had been invited to a party that was going to be held in order to advertise the upcoming movie. It wasn’t surprising as Chase would be

playing a supporting role who had almost as many scenes as the lead role.

‘Blackmail at this timing…’ Josh sighed internally. Moreover, there were increasingly frequent cases of terrorism on Extreme Alphas as of late. The owner of the movie production company and Extreme Alpha, Keith Pittman, had also been a victim. Since he was also pretty much a celebrity, it wasn’t very surprising in some way for him to become targeted. In the case of Chase Miller, however, he was in a much more dangerous position.

They had all been enjoying the peace and quiet while Chase stayed home, but it was about to come to an end. With a grave expression, Mark began, “Let’s first discuss what we should do during the party. The party will be at Mr. Pittman’s mansion…”

Nobody said a word as they concentrated on listening to Mark’s plan.

Just as they were about to wrap up, Mark added, “Everyone brought their tailcoats, right? Make sure you wear them. If you didn’t, we can all rent them together tomorrow. How does that sound? Now, who doesn’t have theirs?”

He looked around at everyone with his hand in the air. Nobody had raised their hand. With a disappointed face, Mark grumbled, “Goddammit, just me?”

As Mark cursed softly under his breath, Henry asked grouchily, “What’s up with the tailcoats? Why should we have to look like peacocks? Can’t we just wear our normal work suits?”

“That’s what we’ve been told to wear. We have no choice,” Mark replied emptily.

For a moment, Isaac and Josh met eyes. Isaac smiled. “Josh looks good in a tailcoat. I’ll look forward to it.”

“Josh looks good even when he’s not wearing anything,” Seth muttered apathetically.

Everyone stared at him. Before Josh could even open his mouth, Isaac asked with a stiff face, “How would you know that?”

Henry crumpled his face and pulled back his torso in disgust. Seth looked flustered and responded, “What’s up with that look? We all went on a vacation together to Miami!”

“Oh.”

“A-ha.”

Everyone suddenly seemed to remember the memory as they turned their heads in disinterest. Isaac glanced at Josh with a softer expression.

“Right, we went surfing together,” Isaac murmured nostalgically as if he were reminiscing.

Josh agreed, “Yeah, it was fun.”

Since it was before he had Pitt, he had spent quite a lot of time with the team members even during vacation. Josh thought that it was a good memory, but Henry seemed to think otherwise. “That’s ancient history. I’m never going on a trip with you again, you little b*stard. You’ve got a trail of women and men behind you wherever you go.”

“Josh is good-looking and has a nice body. It can’t be helped,” Isaac pitched in. He jokingly added, “Though he’s a bit on the shorter side.”

“Thanks a lot,” Josh replied sarcastically.

Seth laughed and agreed, “Yeah. That’s Josh’s only weakness.”

These bastards… Without hesitation, Josh lightly smacked Seth on the back of his head.

Seth playfully glared at Josh. “Thanks to him, we went on a bunch of dates, too. I like going on vacation with Josh. All the girls try to talk to us first, and we don’t need to bother chasing after them.”

“That’s some good stuff, all right. If only I weren’t married—” Before Mark could finish, Isaac stared at Mark. Mark hastily cleared his throat. “I should call home.”

Josh looked away from Mark as Mark quickly left the room. Josh immediately noticed from the corners of his eyes that Henry’s expression was very not good. For some reason, Henry was glaring angrily at Isaac. Had Isaac said something offensive? Josh tried to retrace the conversation, but he couldn’t come up with anything.

It almost seemed as if Henry was about to throw hands with Isaac. Should he stay back and stop the fight? Josh was conflicted for a moment, but there was no need. Contrary to Josh's expectations, Henry got up without a word and began to walk away. Of course, he didn’t forget to leave Josh with one last comment before doing so. “Your turn at the monitoring room.”

“All right,” Josh replied simply. He added with a smile, “Good night, Henry.”

Henry silently stared at Josh. His handsome face—a common feature among most alphas—was taken over by a complex expression.

A moment later, Henry muttered a curse, turned around, and left. Josh was next to get up when he suddenly met eyes with Isaac.

“...? Did you want to say something?” Josh asked, remembering how Isaac had tried to say something a while ago but didn’t.

Isaac opened his mouth before glancing at Seth. Seth was re-examining the bodyguarding plan that they had just been discussing. Isaac looked at Josh once again and smiled like usual. “It’s fine, next time.”

“...Sure.”

Was it something private?

Josh didn’t want to pry, so instead of asking, he simply turned around and headed to the monitoring room.

“Huh?” As Josh was checking the camera monitors one by one, he stopped at one of them. The camera that was showing Chase’s bedroom wasn’t in good shape.

When Josh reported this to Mark, Mark replied as if he already knew about it. “It’s been weird for a few days. I checked back and some of the footage was missing, too… I’m thinking about doing maintenance on it one of these days. Just the other day, Laura was saying that maybe we should get rid of the camera in the bedroom. After all, we’re going pretty deep into his private life. It must be a little concerning for Laura. If we happened to leak something… I know none of us will, but we have to understand that they can’t trust us completely.”

The missing footage must have been from the day Josh had intentionally deleted some. Josh feigned innocence and said, “I get what Laura’s saying. We have other cameras, too. I don’t see why we need one in the bedroom as well…”

“Well, yeah. So I didn’t bother fixing it. Maybe we could just turn it off. It worries me a little to just fully get rid of it…”

In the end, Mark hung up without coming to a decision. Josh stared into the monitor. As Mark has said, the bedroom camera flickered from time to time and didn’t have great resolution.

As Josh sat pondering, he saw Chase walking out of the bathroom just in time.

He was completely naked.

For a moment, Josh was entranced. Even through the crappy monitor, he could see Chase’s perfect physique and face much too clearly.

Chase tossed the towel that he had used to roughly dry his hair onto the floor near his feet and sat down on the bed. He didn’t move for a while as if

he were lost in thought before suddenly looking up. Although there was no way, Josh felt as if he had met eyes with Chase through the security camera.

Chase opened his mouth. His lips shifted as if he were whispering something when the monitor suddenly turned black.

“What the hell?” Josh shouted and jumped up before he could catch himself. He blinked multiple times, but the screen remained black. Nothing had changed. Josh glanced back and forth between the door and the monitor in contemplation.

Should I rush over? Is something going to happen like last time? Wait, he was in rut back then. He’s not in a state to do something like that right now, Josh told himself.

Josh knew all too well that Chase had simply just walked out of the shower.

‘Still,’ Josh thought as he turned his body around. Just then, the screen turned back on as suddenly as it had blacked out. Startled, Josh fixed his gaze onto the screen. On the screen, Chase was already lying down on his bed. A thin bedsheet was draped over his body.

“Hahh…” Josh sighed drearily and flopped down on the chair.

‘What should I do?’ Josh wondered.

He couldn’t ask to turn off the camera when Chase had just received a blackmail note. However, having to watch something like this every so often was practically torture.

Feeling both guilt and self-loathing, Josh frantically rubbed his face. In the end, Josh asked Mark to only be assigned to patrolling outside for a while. This greatly decreased the risk of getting swept away by pheromones and was overall better for him—although it brought him more physical exhaustion.

A few days passed, and the day of Keith Pittman’s party dawned at last.

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Since early morning, tension was in the air around the mansion. Everyone had basically been preparing for this day for an entire week.

Countless people came into and went out of the mansion. A haircut professional, a hair-color professional, a massage professional—all kinds of professionals clung to Chase from head to toe and decorated him like a peacock.

“Being a celebrity also sounds hard,” said Isaac, shaking his head as if just looking at the process made him sick of it. Josh also felt the same, but his reason was a little different.

Do they really have to do all that? That man could just wake up and head straight to the party, and people would still praise him like God, thought Josh. *Even more so after he’s styled and everything.*

When Chase appeared after his hair had been dyed by a professional and all preparations were completed, everyone had the same thought: there’s going to be twice as many zombies targeting him today.

“Get mentally prepared for today, y’all,” Mark warned, looking extremely nervous. Nobody joked around. Everyone even made sure to bring a gun with them. Everyone except for Seth got into their respective cars with hardened expressions. Soon, they set off from the mansion.

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Even though the party was meant to advertise an upcoming movie, Keith Pittman decided to hold it in his house; this was because of security concerns. Apparently, Pittman brought on many temporary security workers for the event. With preparations complete on their end, everyone drove to the mansion where the party was being held. Josh's mind wandered to Keith Pittman.

A world-famous billionaire, a scandal-maker loved by the mass media, a celebrity Extreme Alpha—this was Keith Pittman.

What was most important was that he was Emma’s boss. Back then and even now, Pittman was truly a dangerous man—especially in the eyes of an older brother with a pretty younger sister.

When Keith Knight Pittman had first bought an entertainment company and entered the world of business, many people joked about how he must have tried to establish an entertainment company to become a celebrity himself but made a mistake in investing. Some people made guesses that perhaps he was planning to grow the company first and give himself whatever movie role he liked.

Of course, all of it was wrong. He never once stood in front of the camera himself despite having such an unreal appearance as did most other Extreme Alphas. The only hypothesis that remained out of the countless rumors was that Pittman had bought a company so that he would have an

easier time picking out a partner of his taste. Although Extreme Alphas were somewhat forgiven due to their instincts, the promiscuity that never failed to tag along with their names always alarmed the public.

Keith Knight Pittman was no exception. Any old convenience store at a gas station had newspapers of his photo on the cover page, taken with some fancy woman. Thanks to this, anyone would be confident in recognizing Keith's face if he were to just brush past them—though, of course, the sheer chances of walking past him was as low as winning the lottery.

Because of this, when Josh had first heard that Emma started work as Pittman's secretary, Josh had nagged Emma despite understanding that his full-grown little sister could think about her own future for herself.

"Do you really have nowhere else to go?" Josh had asked, clearly dissatisfied.

Emma had replied sarcastically, "Why don't you introduce me to a workplace with better employee terms, then?"

There was no way that Josh would know such a place. Thanks to Pittman's libertine private life, Josh had worried his bottoms off about Emma getting hurt for many months. It was completely different from back in high school when he could just scare off the hillbillies who used to chase after Emma. Moreover, Josh lived too far from his little sister to be able to protect her.

His only comfort was that Pittman's lavish appearance was far from Emma's taste in men. Unfortunately, Emma had no eyes for men. In Josh's eyes, there were much better-looking and capable men, but Emma would always chase after the scrawniest, nerdiest one of them all.

Josh had even introduced her to a popular running back who was on his football team, only for her to reject him, confess to the biggest nerd in the school, and get shot down. In his fury, Josh had taken his teammates with him to talk some sense into the boy and gotten reprimanded by Emma.

Keith Knight Pittman was a million light years away from Emma's taste in men, but Josh still couldn't trust her. He was concerned that her strange taste would go ham again and she would fall for Pittman, but thankfully, there was no sign of something like that so far. Emma was probably still most interested in the most deer-like man in the crew.

However, before Josh could be relieved, he suddenly recalled what Emma had said to him the last time they met.

"Romance is bound to sprout at the workplace," she had said.

Josh turned pale. Did Emma have someone in mind?

It couldn't be Pittman, could it?

Josh suddenly became anxious, but there was nothing he could do right now. Thankfully, Pittman didn't seem to ever touch his staff members. Emma had also been working for him for years now without trouble. It wouldn't make sense for her to suddenly hold romantic feelings for Pittman.

But those things happen regardless of time, Josh thought to himself. In his head, Emma's past relationships played like a movie reel. She always fell in love with a boy and chased after him first, but none had ended well—though Josh truly could not understand.

Perhaps it was only to be expected since Emma was Josh's little sister, but Emma was quite the beauty even in Josh's eyes. During high school, Josh had a busy time showing a lesson to bumpkins who tried to get close to Emma. Emma hated it, of course, but Josh was serious about it. He couldn't possibly just let the dimwits hit on his little sister. It didn't make a difference even if that dimwit was a stinking rich Extreme Alpha like Keith Knight Pittman.

Josh had once subtly asked Emma about it, determined to throw hands if needed. Emma had told him that the head secretary regularly created a portfolio of partner candidates, and Pittman would choose one out of them. Thankfully, the head secretary seemed to properly draw the line between business and private life. There had been no unfortunate incidents, and Emma was never a candidate for Pittman.

Now that a few years had passed since Emma started working for Pittman, Josh was quite relieved and had almost completely forgotten about it. Emma never said much about things that happened at her workplace, and Josh had also never even imagined that he would come to meet Pittman in person.

Josh had never told his family about who he was working for. After all, all information regarding Chase Miller was top secret. Thankfully, Josh had asked subtly and heard from Emma that she wouldn't be at the party today. When she told Josh that the head secretary was usually the one in charge of these parties, Josh felt a little less worried. Parties hosted by Extreme Alphas could never be trusted.

By now, Emma was probably done with work and resting at home, which was probably for the best. Conversely, Josh was in his car on the way to work.

“Have you ever met Pittman in person?” asked Isaac, who was sitting next to Josh, out of the blue. Josh shook his head in negation. Isaac stared straight ahead with empty eyes and murmured, “I wonder if he also has a bad temper.”

“Are there any Extreme Alphas without a temper?” Josh asked back.

Isaac fell silent. They didn’t speak another word until they arrived at the destination.

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Pittman’s mansion where the party was being hosted was surrounded from very early by both reporters and the public who had gathered to take a look. Beyond the large iron gates was a completely different world, but what was revealed to the public was a very limited space that had been closed off with a rope barrier.

“Nwahhhhhh…!” As soon as they opened the car door, screams closer to shrieks exploded. The thundering cheers reminded Josh of the pack of zombies that had come running toward Chase. Chills ran down his spine.

Not too far away from them, the actress who would be acting with Chase as his partner was waving and making her way into the mansion. Everyone, including Josh, immediately surrounded Chase’s car. Mark quickly looked around before opening the door of the car. Finally, Chase Miller made his appearance.

“...!”

Their hearing seemed to fail them for a moment. Everyone jolted back. Even though they each had one ear partially blocked by an earpiece, their eardrums felt as if they would burst. However, when Chase entered Josh’s sight not long after, Josh was completely taken.

In order to fit his new role, Chase had dyed his hair black today. His pale complexion looked even paler in contrast to his black locks. His red lips accentuated the fragile look that he always had about him. As he gently pulled back a stray tuft of hair with his fingers, the crowd—and even Josh, who had already seen Chase’s transformation back in Chase’s mansion—forgot how to breathe.

“Why does that son of a b*tch have to be so good-looking?” Henry muttered from behind, which yanked Josh back to reality. Henry had used some brusque language, but it was relatable nonetheless. Anyone who met

Chase Miller in person would think the same. Even Josh, who saw him almost every day and was absolutely sick of his terrible personality, was blown away by his beauty.

Chase's usual brilliant blond hair shimmered like the night sky tonight. Moreover, the short cut emphasized the elegance of his facial structure.

Josh thought to himself that Chase would look breathtakingly beautiful even if he were to completely shave his head. Tonight, however, instead of having his head shaved, he had his black hair neatly trimmed. He was wearing a tailcoat that went very well with his tall stature and lean body. His getup was perfect; it was as if he were at a ceremony for the Academy Awards.

As intended, flashes burst out from all directions, and people continuously shouted out his name. Chase's expression remained unchanged as he waved his hand without a hint of sincerity as if he couldn't be bothered. Behind Chase, Henry grumbled softly, "Pretentious bastard." Josh sort of agreed.

People everywhere were making every effort to get close. The security guards stopped them with every last bit of their abilities. As there had been multiple accidents already, the number of security guards hired for tonight was immense, and crowd control was many times more thorough.

"Phew…" They could finally let out a sigh of relief after passing the crowd and entering the mansion where the party was being held. All around them were actors who would be acting in the upcoming movie, staff members, and other celebrity invitees. Even Isaac, who wasn't very interested in celebrities, was at a loss for words for a moment.

Mark was also stunned for a second, but he quickly came to and encouraged the other team members. "We should get to work. Everyone, stay alert. You all know what you have to do, right?"

"Yes, Mark." Everyone took turns in replying.

Josh soon shifted his gaze to check their surroundings. He caught sight of the butler greeting the guests. Josh gestured at Mark with his eyes and stepped back. Josh had been instructed by Mark to scout out the area.

Henry and Isaac watched Chase from a distance, ready to move immediately should something happen to him. Seth was told to station back at Chase's mansion.

They had already been relayed the information about the key attendees of the party, but it wasn't like they knew every one of the guests'

accompaniers, bodyguards, and staff members. They couldn't lower their guards. Josh's job was to check the surroundings for any suspicious activities.

Since most attendees were well-known by the public and since Pittman must have hired many more security guards than usual, there wasn't a high chance of anything happening. However, since Chase had even received blackmail, they couldn't stay relieved. Josh didn't let down his guard even against other security guards who were also scouting out the area.

As Josh looked around swiftly, he spotted someone in the corner of his eyes and came to a halt. He didn't need to look at the man's purple eyes to know that he was an Extreme Alpha.

Keith Pittman, Josh murmured internally. He had seen Keith's face in countless forms of media, but this was his first time seeing Keith in person.

Pittman was as tall as he had imagined. He was wearing a spotless suit, and his physique hidden underneath was perfect. Josh could relate to the media's disappointment in Keith not acting in a movie himself. Even if that man were to just stand and breathe in one corner of the screen, the movie would become a surefire hit.

When Josh reached this point in thought, he belatedly realized that he couldn't smell the Extreme Alpha pheromones from Keith. Just as he began to wonder why, he saw the clear imprint on Keith's ear.

"Was Pittman married?" Josh whispered softly to Mark.

Mark replied in an equally quiet voice, "No, didn't you know? Somebody imprinted him without him knowing and then disappeared. He's got his eyes open for the culprit."

As Josh stood in shock, Mark added nonchalantly, "Seems like he wasn't in his right mind because he was in rut. You know Alphas are basically done for if they get imprinted one-sidedly. If he isn't able to find the omega, he'll have to live forever alone. Who knew that Pittman would get tied down by someone whose face he didn't even know? This is why he should have been kinder to people."

Although Josh was in the exact opposite situation, Josh could empathize with Pittman. Even so, Pittman must feel much worse than him.

At least Josh knew who had imprinted him.

For the first time, Josh felt pity for an Extreme Alpha. As long as Keith Pittman remained imprinted, he would not be able to smell anyone's pheromones except for that of the omega who imprinted him.

Things like this really showed that alphas had a disadvantage over omegas. The moment they were imprinted, their life was basically in the omega's grip.

Instinctively fiddling with his ear over the earpiece, Josh thought to himself, *We were both imprinted, but I can find a new partner and he can't.*

At the same time, Pitt's face popped into his mind. Josh felt sorry for Keith.

If it had been him who had lost his sanity and left an imprint and not Chase…

"Apparently Pittman is set on killing the omega when he finds them," Mark added. Josh retracted his thought. He was thankful that he was the one who had been imprinted.

After ensuring that Chase had reached where the party was, Mark ordered everyone to assume their respective positions. As they had already discussed, Josh set off to patrol around the mansion. An endless cheer echoed from outside the estate.

✦ ✦ ✦

"...there, it's my first time seeing one."

"His eyes are really purple. It's so strange."

All around Chase were murmurs and glances. Chase creased his brow ever so slightly and ignored them. He had always been the target of small whispering voices and peering eyes. This would probably continue until the day he died. Perhaps he would be the topic of gossip and scorn even after death.

Just the fact that he was an Extreme Alpha was enough to make people steal glances at him as if he were a rare animal. In all honesty, he was a rare animal. Out of the countless people who had gathered at tonight's party, Pittman and Chase were the only Extreme Alphas. The only difference was that they weren't in cages.

Chase was suddenly reminded of the man who constantly spaced out while staring at his face. Chase knitted his eyebrows. He already knew from a long time ago that everybody only liked him for his face. Moreover, that man didn't even deny that fact.

Shameless bastard, Chase thought as he chugged his champagne. What irritated him even more was the fact that he was thinking about this man.

His realization that Josh had been avoiding Chase like a plague for the past few days was also enough to tick him off.

It couldn't be that he quit, could it?

The realization that he hadn't even seen neither hair nor hide of Josh since Josh cooked for him made Chase flinch.

Why am I thinking about someone like him? What does it matter whether he quits or not? Chase thought to himself. It must be because the party was too boring.

He needed something to entertain himself with, but there was no way that such a thing existed. It was common for Extreme Alphas to be treated like circus animals, but it happened particularly more often and more blatantly for Chase. However, he didn't want to tire himself out appeasing people at a party that he had attended out of obligation. Perhaps others had read his thoughts; everyone just stood afar and whispered among themselves.

The best defense Chase could put up was to simply ignore them. He just needed to waste some time, say hello to Keith Pittman, and go back home—just like he always did.

But there were always overly friendly people everywhere.

"It's been a while, Chase. How have you been?" asked the woman. Chase stared at her for a moment, clearly not remembering who it was. The woman smiled and introduced herself, "Naomi Parker. We'll be acting in the same movie. I look forward to working with you."

Out of formality, Chase grabbed her pale, outstretched hand and quickly let go.

'Now leave,' Chase hoped as he stared at her with a hardened expression. Naomi, however, didn't seem to care at all.

She blatantly showed her interest by scanning Chase up and down before pinning her gaze onto his face once again. "Grayson was complaining about how the role didn't suit you, but I think it fits you quite well. Why did he complain like that? He must have felt awkward since you're his little brother."

The name of his sibling had been mentioned by an actress that he wasn't close to, but Chase wasn't surprised. Glancing at the woman who was now giggling as if she had recalled a funny memory, Chase replied gruffly, "He probably meant it."

“Oh my, really? Why? You look gorgeous,” Naomi asked, exaggeratedly blinking her eyes.

Instead of giving a response, Chase brought his glass of champagne to his lips. Grayson must have slept with this woman. Since it was something that happened often, Chase’s reaction was rather dry. Grayson always described himself as a “lonely wolf searching for his true love,” which was absolutely ridiculous, but Chase saw it as nothing more than nonsense spouted by a playboy with nothing better to do.

...Despite the fact that Grayson had never even felt emotions before.

Chase didn’t even need to ask Naomi what Grayson had been saying about Chase’s upcoming role to know it. For others, it might have been correct to assume that they felt awkward about it and made hyperbolic remarks, but that was certainly not the case with Grayson. Grayson truly, absolutely hated that Chase took this role. And Chase was truly, absolutely sick of his older brother.

Seeing Chase’s lukewarm reaction, Naomi smiled awkwardly and changed the subject. “Have you read the original work? The series was so long that I couldn’t finish reading everything. I was honestly surprised that you were cast as Dr. Flame. Though, of course, there seems to be much talk about my role as well.”

The actress was infamous for having a complicated private life. Having been cast for a role that was the stark opposite of her public image, she seemed somewhat troubled.

“We better both do our best, huh?” she murmured. In contrast to her smiling face, her eyes shook nervously. She was a top-tier actress overflowing with confidence, but it must have been getting to her after all. However, Chase merely gazed down at her with a frown.

The fact that Chase was barely responding made Naomi nervous for an entirely different reason. How was she going to act with a man like this?

She had watched many movies starring Chase, so she knew that he was a very capable actor. However, that was after everything had been edited. Filming a movie as a co-actress was a completely different story. Naomi felt a seed of doubt take root in her.

Perhaps his movies were a product of a few hard-found cuts out of countless NGs.

“Do you even know who our roles are?” she asked distrustfully.

Before Chase could respond, another voice intervened. “Of course he does. He signed the contract, after all.”

Naomi jolted and turned around. Her face quickly lit up when she spotted a familiar face standing there. It was obvious that she was glad to have escaped an uncomfortable situation, but Chase didn’t care. Experiences like this happened all the time.

“Keith,” she began, looking truly happy to see Keith. She was just beginning to regret striking a conversation with Chase. She smiled and said, “It’s been a while. Thanks for giving me this role. I actually never expected to take on a role like this.”

Keith Pittman’s expression remained unchanging as if he had expected it. “I just thought that it would suit you well.”

“Nobody else seems to think so,” Naomi replied cheekily.

Apathetically still, Keith replied, “Then you can prove whether they’re right or I’m right.”

“Oh my,” she laughed in a way that jingled like a bell. Unlike her image as Hollywood’s sexiest actress, her giggle sounded like that of a playful child. Looking a little happier, Naomi looked around Keith and blinked. “What happened to your partner, though? I thought I had seen her a little while ago. Was I mistaken?”

‘There’s no way that this man would attend a party alone,’ Naomi thought to herself. However, Keith didn’t seem keen on telling her. All he did was pull out his cigarette case and take a cigarette to his mouth. It seemed like he either didn’t know where his partner was or didn’t care at all.

Naomi was starting to regret having asked a needless question when she spotted the director in the corner of her eye. She bade us farewell and quickly left.

Murmurs softly continued around the two Extreme Alphas. However, they didn’t say anything to each other. All they did was silently stare at each other.

Keith was the first to speak. “Grayson kept following me around and nagging me for days.”

Chase smiled cynically as he was not surprised. But he was still a little curious as to how Keith would react. Keith skillfully lit his cigarette and exhaled deeply, leaving a long trail of smoke.

“If you really don’t want to do it, you don’t need to force yourself. Of course, you’d have to pay the penalty as per the contract,” Keith said, his voice void of any emotion. He was certainly being serious, and so was Chase.

“I don’t intend to pay a penalty,” replied Chase.

“All right,” answered Keith.

And that was it. Keith didn’t say anything else. Silence took over for a moment.

Keith brought the cigarette to his lips and muttered softly, “It’s not easy to live as Grayson’s little brother.”

Chase laughed a little. “Would have been better if you were my older brother.”

It was unclear whether Chase was joking or not. Keith remained expressionless and showed no reaction at all. Keith exhaled once again, and white smoke trailed across the air. He snapped his wrist a few times with the cigarette between his slender fingers, flicking off the ashes. “My siblings would certainly disagree.”

If they had Grayson as their older brother just for a day, they’d be thanking God that Keith was their older brother, Chase thought stoically.

Keith flicked off the ashes of a half-burned cigarette on an ashtray that a passing waiter was carrying. Just then, Keith’s gaze darted to one side. A long trail of smoke rose from the cigarette hanging between his fingers.

Strangely enough, he stared intently in one direction, frozen to his spot, and left before Chase could say anything else. Keith was gone in an instant; now left hanging, Chase lit his cigarette and remained standing in the same place for a while.

The sound of people chatting among themselves rang in Chase’s ears. He tried gulping down his champagne, but it was nowhere enough to make him drunk. He already knew that he had to drink all the champagne prepared for the party in order for him to get wasted.

Laughter and meaningless chatter sounded from all around him, but he was alone. A soft sigh escaped his mouth. With a cigarette lodged between his lips, Chase emptily blinked his eyes. He was suddenly craving some cool air.

He was about to turn around and walk out of the party hall when an unfamiliar woman stepped in front of him. Chase instinctively creased his

brows. The woman smiled and chirped, “Hello, Mr. Miller. Would it be all right if I just called you Chase?”

Chase glowered down at her. No matter what he said, she would just call him whatever she wanted.

“Nice to meet you, Chase. I’m Veronica Lee. We’ll be in the upcoming movie together. You can just call me Vicky.” As expected, she called him by his name right away and amicably taught him her own nickname. However, Chase maintained an indifferent expression and showed no reaction. All he was thinking about was how he could get out of this hall.

Although his cold reaction was enough to embarrass anyone, Vicky was persistent. Still with a smile, she continued, “I always wanted to meet you, really. I’ve never seen an Extreme Alpha before. I did also meet Mr. Pittman today, but you’re really beautiful.”

A glimmer of innocent praise took over Vicky’s face. This wasn’t Chase’s first time meeting someone who had so openly showered him with compliments, but it also certainly didn’t happen very often. Chase squinted his eyes, trying to figure out what she wanted. In any case, it was probably either just the curiosity of coming face-to-face with a rare creature or she was trying to connect with a network using the popularity of a top actor—perhaps both.

“I heard that you were going to be in this movie, so I begged the director that I wanted a chance to act in it no matter what. I really wanted to try working with you. I’m a really big fan, Chase. Really, really!” she chimed enthusiastically, her voice no different from that of an eager fan. She picked up two glasses of champagne from the tray being carried by a waiter who just happened to be passing by and offered one to Chase, as if to ask for a round of cheers.

Chase took the glass from her and chugged it right away, hoping to bring an end to this conversation. However, as soon as Chase began walking, she immediately followed.

“Can we talk about the series for a moment? I’m a huge Dr. Flame fan as much as I am yours. I would like to hear your opinion about Dr. Flame,” Vicky persisted, grabbing onto Chase’s arm. Their distance closed in an instant, and a scent that had gone unnoticed trickled across the tip of Chase’s nose.

It was the scent of an omega.

Chase stopped walking and gazed down at Vicky. Vicky waited for his reaction, her face flushed red and her eyes glimmering.

Chase spoke for the first time, “Are you an omega?”

“Yes,” she replied shyly. Her cheeks seemed to turn a deeper shade of pink, and the scent of her pheromones became even stronger. Vicky was blatantly trying to seduce Chase.

However, that wasn’t the end. Chase could smell another omega from behind him. For the first time since arriving at the party, Chase panicked. Was there supposed to be this many omegas at this party? Keith hadn’t told him anything about this.

Then he realized why. Pittman couldn’t smell other pheromones at all. This meant that he would never be seduced by any other omega besides the one who had left the imprint on him.

I, on the other hand— Chase bit his lip, feeling his back begin to break out in cold sweat.

Vicky closed in and clung to his arm. “Chase—”

“Get away from me!” he yelled abruptly, shaking her off his arm. Everyone’s surprised eyes fell on them at once. However, all Chase could do was glare at Vicky with bloodshot eyes, huffing his breath in agitation. “Get lost! I don’t care if you’re my fan or whatever. You’re disgusting. Omegas make me sick!”

Vicky’s face turned beet red. People who were exchanging meaningless small talk glanced in their direction. However, Chase simply shot her another glare and left without another word.

I’m sick of it, Chase thought as he clenched his teeth, leaving behind the endless whispers that seemed to follow him everywhere. *I’m sick of it. I’m sick of everything.*

✦ ✦ ✦

Even though Chase had found his way outside, he was still feeling lightheaded. Chase belatedly realized that he had made the wrong choice.

He should have just gone home right away.

It was too late to regret. He chose the second-best option instead; he tried to endure his nausea as he frantically searched for a cigarette. The scent of pheromones that lingered at the tip of his nose was overturning his head.

Damn it, of course it had to be an omega. Chase audibly gritted his teeth, but all he could do was hold his breath and hastily light his cigarette. He was planning to neutralize the effect of the pheromones with nicotine.

“Hahh…” he sighed. He held his breath after inhaling the cigarette smoke quickly and deeply. He then exhaled slowly. He inhaled the smoke, paused, exhaled, and repeated this two or so more times. The scent of the pheromones diminished.

Perhaps it was just because his sense of smell had dulled. Since he had inhaled the smoke way too quickly, a wave of dizziness jumbled up his brain. It was the worst.

“...Oh, for fuck’s sake!” In the end, Chase cursed and aggressively rubbed his eyes with his wrist. He was so angry, he couldn’t bear it. If someone were to walk by right now, he would be very tempted to beat them to death.

Rustle!

Just then, a sound separate from the leaves rustling in the wind pierced his ears—a sound made by a person.

There stood the man from Chase’s dream.

Joshua Bailey.

Chase mouthed the name of the man who was staring at him in surprise.

To Be Continued in Volume 2

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